

Scenario 3 (2025 - 2055), Agnes

In 2025 Agnes is 55 years old. She lives in a single-family home in Gemen. She took over the house after her parents, who had bought it when they came to Germany, moved into a retirement home. After having lived in the house for about 15 years with her husband Ewald and their two children, her children moved out. Agnes and Ewald start feeling that the house has become too big for them. Meanwhile, a cooperative has just acquired three nearby houses from the city. When the members of the co-op introduce their project to their new neighbors, Agnes feels inspired to change her own living situation. After her experience with organizing care for her parents, she is enthusiastic about the co-op’s focus on collectivizing care. The couple decides to join them.

Gradually the co-op purchases more homes in the direct neighborhood. Agnes’ and Ewald’s upper floor becomes a multipurpose space that can be used as a guest house, office or meeting place by members of the coop and sympathizing neighbors. Due to a tight budget the first architectural interventions are minor: the ground and upper floor are separated, and two plaster walls are removed to create bigger spaces. Members of the co-op or neighborhood that would like to use the space can pay a fee to gain access. Agnes and Ewald help to set up a vegetable garden and green house which are part of the preparations for domestic services such as a common kitchen with a dining hall that the co-op is planning.

After a few years, plans are drawn up to extend Agnes’ and Ewald’s home in a general densification effort. As both, now in their early seventies, begin to face difficulties with the maintenance of their household, such as washing laundry in the basement, they use the opportunity to relocate. They move to a home of the co-op down the street which has been remodeled and extended and now houses a shared flat for ageing inhabitants. Agnes and Ewald are specifically attracted to the mutual aid provided among inhabitants and spatial features such as the barrier-free layout of the apartment and easy accessibility to the main building that will house the dining hall.

They move into two generous rooms of the shared flat with a private bathroom. The size of their bedroom allows for additional accommodation of a nursing bed. The den, as the point of entrance, houses a small kitchenette and a wardrobe wall with a washing machine. Accessed through the den the common living room in the extension with a fireplace is shared with all eight rooms on the floor. While Ewald enjoys spending most of his time with other members of the community, Agnes more often likes to use their second room as a place of retreat.

As younger inhabitants they, together with the residents of the upper floor, take up caring responsibilities for the older inhabitants. When they reach a higher age, they can expect the same treatment. Over the years, the community grows their skill and knowledge base, including dealing with the bureaucracy of the institutions that organize care. The third floor of the extension is a multipurpose space that is used for guests, small workout classes, and smaller meetings of the co-op. Meetings with the over 100 members that the co-op has accumulated in 2055 are held in the common dining hall.