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CoHousing with Socialist and Feminist Twists?  
Alva Myrdal's 'Collective House' in 1932 Sweden

In 1930, a group of Swedish architects and town planners-- including Uno Aahren, Walter Gahn, and Sven Markelius--joined in mounting The Stockholm Exposition, the launching point of "Swedish modern" design. The book accompanying this event, ACCEPTERA ("Accept!"), was strongly ideological, demanding a radical alteration in urban architecture and housing design. Styles tied to the old, pastoral world and reflecting "elegance" must give way to "free, independent, living art work" driving the future. The Study Circle formed by this group included other young Stockholm social democrats, notably the economist Gunnar Myrdal and his wife Alva. The latter, raised in a stridently socialist, atheist, and feminist home, teamed up with architect Markelius in 1932 to design a collectivized form of housing--a "Collective House"-- that would embody both socialist and feminist goals. Rejecting the traditional family and the stay-at-home mother as dying artifacts, their form of "co-housing" would see husbands and wives as "comrades" in productive labor outside the home, while children would be raised in collective nurseries and 24-hour day care centers. Their proposal generated a huge public debate over the condition of the Swedish family and the relationship of housing policy to the falling birthrate and other social changes. This debate offers both insights and warnings for the current Co-Housing movement in America.