Normative and relative aspects of the usability of common spaces in assisted living for older people

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Purpose:
Discuss the usability of common spaces in AL (Assisted Living).

Selection:
14 AL facilities in Sweden (10 DRD-units and 15 somatic/non-DRD)
Residents, staff, relatives, architects, planners

Strategy/methods:
Mixed methods QUAL/QUAN with participant observation (n=302), semi-structured individual (n=21) and group interviews (n=24), questionnaire (n=193), statistical analyses (Pearson’s product-moment correlation, paired t-test), triangulation

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Schematic relation between the functional typology of ordinary housing (a) and assisted living (b)
Common spaces in AL

Shared spaces for communal activities in AL facilities, containing “functions and equipment for cooking, daily social interaction and dining” for a group of residents.

(The Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning).
User configuration in relation to private-public aspects

Situation 1: resident with low dependency using the sitting room

Situation 2: resident with high dependency using the sitting room
User configuration in relation to private-public aspects

- **High**: Dining and sitting room in a dementia unit
- **Low**: Dining and sitting room in a somatic unit
- **Care/workplace/public**: Common kitchen in a somatic or dementia unit
The complexity of the building in use context

- User configuration
- Short-term spatial configuration of the facility
- Organization
- Laws, policies and regulations
- Long-term

Duration of the structure

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The divergence between the planning context and the building in use

**THE PLANNING CONTEXT**
- NORMATIVE

- Intended/projected function
- intended use
- acceptable change

**THE BUILDING IN USE CONTEXT**
- RELATIONAL

- Intended/projected function
- changed use
- usability loss
- actual use

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The location of the common spaces in a private-public continuum
Conclusion

+ Common kitchens are not used at all
+ Used differently by residents with DRD/non DRD
+ Common spaces are ambiguous

= New typology for AL in Sweden and other countries?