

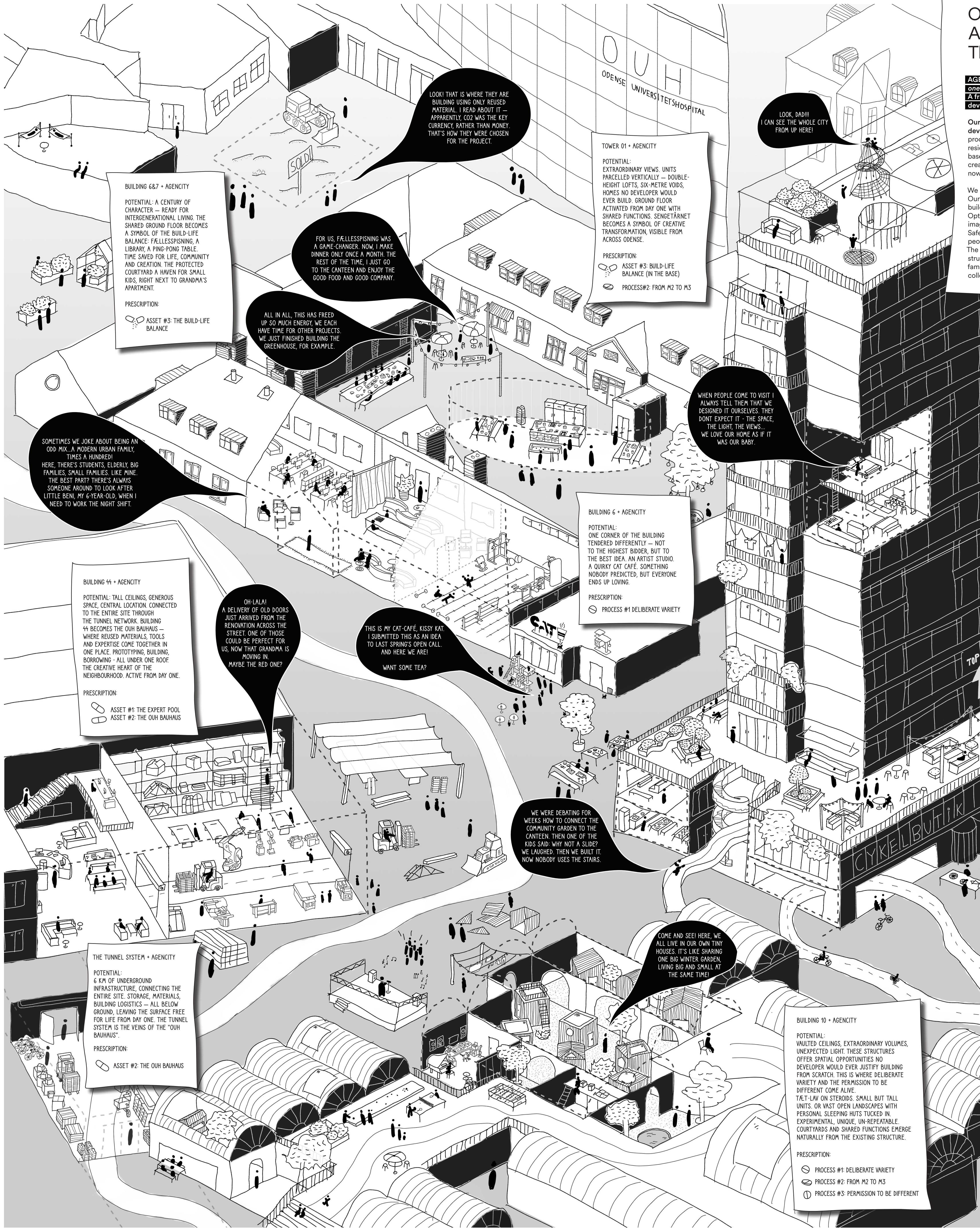
AGENCY NOW!

From a 'BLANDEMIC' to an 'AGENCY' - a framework for a diverse future for OUH

WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES, JUST BEFORE BEDTIME, I CAN JUST ABOUT PICTURE IT. IT'S THE LIFE I WANT TO LEAD. I WANT TO PLANT HERBS IN THE GARDEN, I WANT TO LIVE IN A SPACE THAT FEELS LIKE A REFLECTION OF ME, I WANT INTRIGUE AND STIMULATION, I WANT TO KNOW MY NEIGHBORS, I WANT TO CARE ABOUT THEIR DAY. IT'S A PLACE WITH BIG TREES AND A RIDICULOUSLY LONG TABLE WHERE ALL MY FRIENDS CAN FIT - LOUD DINNERS, LATE NIGHTS, THE KIND OF PLACE THAT PULLS PEOPLE IN A HOME.

THEN I OPEN BOLIGSIDEN. SCROLLING, SCROLLING. ONE BLAND STANDARD FLAT AFTER THE OTHER. WHITE GYPSUM BOARDS AND KITCHENS MADE FOR INSTAGRAM RATHER THAN FOR REAL LIFE. I PUT THE PHONE DOWN.

HOW COME THE SPACES WE LIVE IN ARE THE SAME EVEN THOUGH WE ARE ALL SO DIFFERENT?



OUH provides the bones. AGENCY is the enabler. The people of Odense provide the heart.

AGENCY: (a) agency (the power to shape one's own life) + city
A framework for alternative, people-led urban development, designed specifically for OUH.

Our proposal: reserve 50% of OUH for development the AGENCY way: No standard process, no standard tender model, no standard residential developments. Just a community-based strategy that unlocks the diversity and creativity of Odense and turns it into a place like nowhere else in Denmark.

We are all different. Our dreams. Our families. Our lives. And yet across Denmark, we keep building more or less, the same thing. Optimised for the profit. Designed for an imaginary average person that does not exist. Safe, predictable, and rarely inspiring to the people who will actually live there.

The reality is a collage of different family structures and relationships, big families, small families, modern families, empty nesters, student collectives, remote workers, the list goes on!

One size fits none. Actually, one size fits nubs. OUH is the chance to change that.

274,000 m² in the heart of Odense. A century of accumulated character: laboratories, wards, courtyards, tunnels, vaulted halls. Bones that no developer could manufacture from scratch. A site so unique that applying a conventional model would be a waste of historic proportions. Done differently, OUH becomes something Denmark has never seen before. A place that gives people genuine agency over where and how they live, rather than a one-size-fits-all solution handed to them by the market. A neighbourhood as diverse and unexpected as the people who will live in it.

OUH provides the architectural bones. AGENCY is the enabler to unlock the potential. The life, the creativity, the diversity, the community, the unexpectedness, the dreams; all of that will come from the people of Odense.

MOTIVATION THE DISEASE

Stage 1: Plot division
 A large plot is released. Minimum 10,000 m². Often 30,000 m². Sold to the highest bidder, a pension fund, an institutional investor, excluding smaller or private investors from the start.

Stage 2: Financial management
 The local- or municipal plan regulates the size and type of housing - not the future residents! Those who dream of a multi-generational home in tower01, an large open loft in B60, a tiny house or a student collective in B6, a country estate in the middle of Odense.

Stage 3: Maximising return of investment
 Units are squeezed. Standard types are chosen: open-plan kitchen-living room, 7 m² children's bedrooms, 42 metre building depth. The floor plan that sells and just passes the regulations.

Stage 4: Lookmaxxing
 The real estate broker checks their KPI's - they know what sells. The architect comes in. Eggshell white in one stairwell, foggy grey in another, to give it "personality". The facade is chopped into "houses" of different shades of low-maintenance brick, to disguise the scale and simulate diversity.

Outcome:
 At every step in the chain: land, financing, design, construction, sales - Value is extracted from the future resident. By the time they move in, every decision has already been made. From an overall layout to the kitchen design (that will be torn out soon anyway).

THE SYMPTOMS Blandemic (Blandemia Architectonica Indifferentialis)

Observation:
 Neighbourhoods that look the same. Homes built for a market, not for the people who live in them. Buildings that turn people indifferent.

Social symptom:
 In Denmark, more than 1 in 10 people experience severe loneliness. Among 25-34-year-olds, the generation now entering the housing market, the figure is 22%. Since 2013, severe loneliness among young people has tripled. (Mary Fonden, 2024)

Economic symptom:
 In 2004, 42% of 30-year-olds owned their home. Today that figure is 31%. The number of young first-time buyers is at its lowest level in

a decade. In Odense, housing costs now exceed the city's own historical average. The market is moving faster than people can follow. (AE-rådet / Finans Danmark, 2025)

Behavioural symptom:
 Danish kitchens are replaced every 11 years on average - two to three times before they need replacing. 93% are torn out purely because the owner didn't like the look. (YouGov/VidenCentret Bolius, 2021)

Prognosis: 'Bolgibyrden' - defined as the proportion of disposable income spent on housing costs, is increasing and for several groups it exceeds the critical 30% limit (BLK)

THE RESEARCH Documented Benefits of Co-Building

Baugruppe cost savings
 By eliminating developer profit and marketing costs, baugruppen in Germany deliver 15-20% cost savings compared to conventional development for higher quality, more personalised homes. (The Urbanist, 2014 / SPUR, 2017)

Reduced car-dependency
 With 160 cars per 1,000 residents, Vauban is significantly less car-dependent than the German average of 500 cars per 1,000 residents. (Coates, Int. J. of Design & Nature and Economics, 2014)

The "IKEA-effect"
 When people help create something, they value it significantly more than an identical pre-made alternative. (Norton, Mochon & Ariely, Journal of Consumer Psychology, 2012)

In a Danish study of AlmenBoligs-estates, 89% of residents made personal investments in improving their homes. Residents consistently reported that these improvements increased their sense of ownership. (Gjenskov & Steingard, Aalborg University, 2017)

90% COST REDUCTION

93% German average

Documented challenges

Space savings
 Families in co-housing use 12% less private space per person and report significantly higher quality of life. *

Academic over-representation
 Danish co-housing, residents with higher education are overrepresented by 196%. *

Diversity deficit
 In Danish co-housing, only 1% of residents have a non-Western background compared to 9% nationally.

Statistics for Denmark & Odense

17%

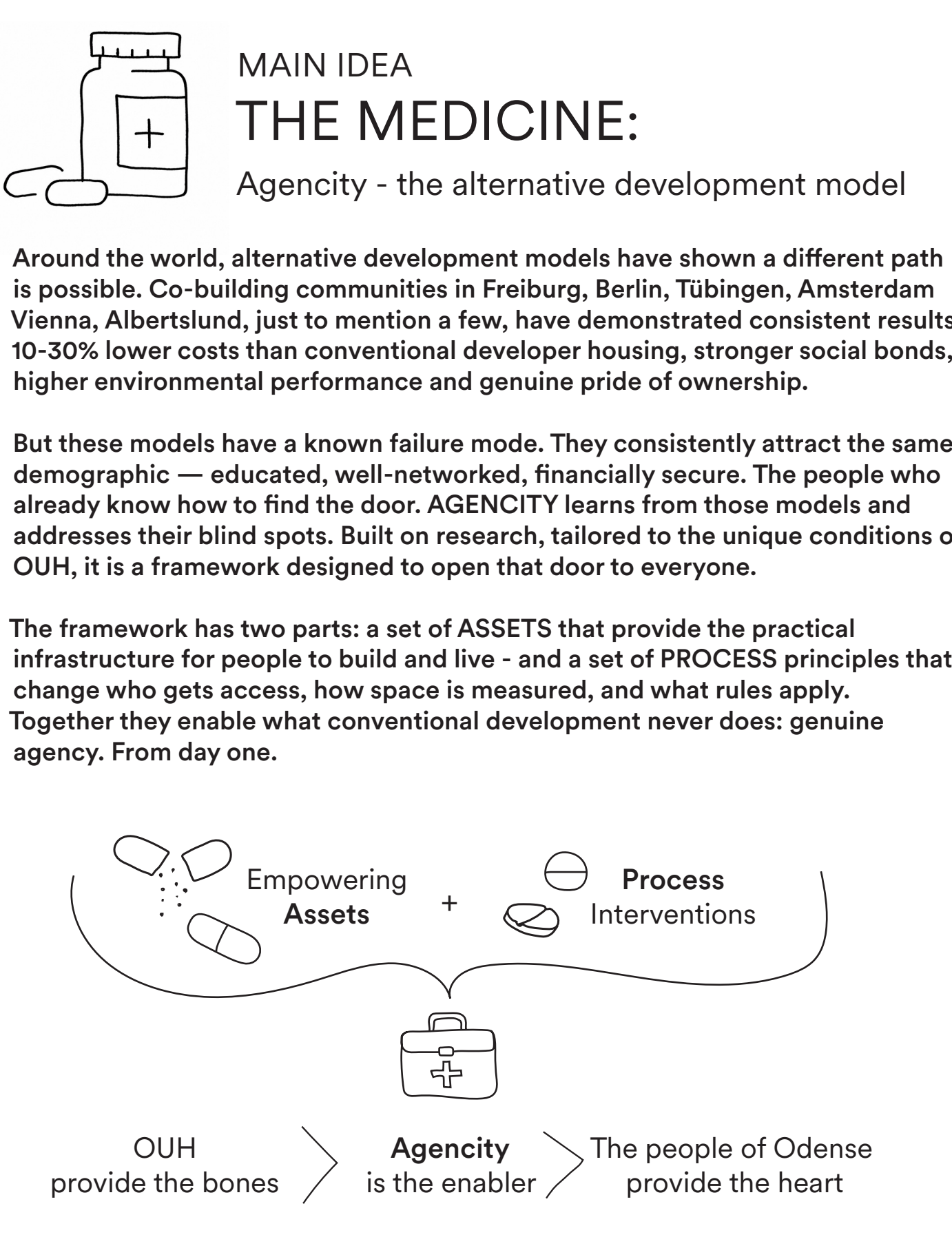
Loneliness epidemic
 17% of 16-24-year-olds in Denmark feel severe loneliness. (Esbensen / Denmark, Mary Fonden - H.M. Dronning Marys fond, 2024)

The Odense squeeze
 Building a m² costs roughly the same across Denmark. But new apartments sell for half the price in Odense compared to Copenhagen. To maintain their margins, developers opt for quality - not profit. Odenseans pay a lot relative to their income, and get less in return. (Byggeskær, 2025 / Finans Danmark, 2025)

Well educated but less well off
 Odense is home to a higher share of university-educated residents than the national average. Yet disposable income is 11% below and net family wealth is 27% lower. (Lexis / Danmarks Statistik, 2024, Odense Kommune)

Demand for alternatives
 1 in 3 Odenseans find co-housing attractive. * Nationally, there are 10 times as many Danes wanting to live in co-housing as there are homes available. (Odense / stat, 2025 / BUILD/Realtdania, 2022)

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Asset #1 The Expert Pool : A local bank of knowledge

One of the most consistent barriers to alternative housing is access to knowledge.

Legal frameworks, building regulations, financing structures - navigating these requires expertise most people simply don't have. Research confirms: process complexity and lack of professional networks are primary reasons co-building remains a model for the educated and well-connected. (Hamiduddin & Daseking, 2014 / Co-Housing Communities in Denmark, 2022)

The expert pool changes that. Architects, engineers, legal advisors, community organisers and financial guides, physically present at OUH and ready to support any group through the process.

It works in two tiers. The basics are covered by the partnership as a responsibility. Deeper support is available at cost price. Fees cover cost, not profit.

In conventional developments, professionals extract value. Here, value stays in the community.

Asset #2 The OUH-Bauhaus: An open workshop a re-use station

Building your own home has always required resources most urban dwellers simply don't have. A car. A trailer. Storage space. Time on a Saturday. Agency over your own living space has quietly become a privilege of the periphery.

At the OUH Bauhaus, materials, tools and workshop space are at the heart of the neighbourhood. Accessible on foot. Connected underground through the tunnel network, which moves materials quietly between buildings without disturbing the life above.

The hospital provides the inventory and materials for reuse. A century of tiles, timber, steel, doors and fittings, made available as a material bank at cost price rather than sent to landfill.

Co-located alongside the expert pool, materials and knowledge sit side by side. You touch the tiles while designing your kitchen, with the expertise right next to you. Nothing wasted. Nothing extracted, just looped back into the ecosystem of OUH.

Asset #3 The Build-Life Balance: The time-saving system

The build-life balance is about doing what Danes have done since 1972, when Sættedammen, the first Danish bolleflask, was established: sharing daily life to free up time. However, today there are ten times as many Danes wanting to live in co-housing as there are homes available. (BUILD/Realtdania, 2022) OUH is a chance to change that - and it already has the perfect physical frame for it.

The old canteens and industrial kitchens, once feeding hundreds of people every day, now waiting for a new kind of daily life. When twenty households start taking turns, complemented by a digital platform that coordinates shared meals, picking up kids and errands, hundreds of hours are freed. Time for other things, like co-building!

For some, the build life balance will be a life-saver, for others an occasional bonus. But what it definitely creates is a neighbourhood that keeps adapting. Dwellings that grow and change with the people who live in them. It allows for a truly creative neighbourhood and strong community to emerge.

Process Intervention #1 Deliberate Variety

Deliberate Variety means offering OUH's buildings at varying scales and through different processes to a wide range of groups, all to ensure that OUH becomes as diverse as Odense itself.

Every process has a built-in filter. Conventional development excludes most people from the start. Alternative models like concept tendering are better, but they demand both up-front capital and cultural capital. Research confirms it: in Danish co-housing, residents with higher education are overrepresented by 196%, and only 1% have a non-Western background compared to 9% nationally. (BUILD/Realtdania, 2022)

There is no perfect model. So rather than searching for the optimal one, AGENCY deliberately runs many at once. A single room for an artist. A floor for a cooperative. A wing for a baugruppe. Open competitions. First-come-first-served. Active outreach to groups that would never find the system themselves.

OUH becomes genuinely diverse, not prescribed into every single block, but organically at the scale of the whole neighbourhood. A real laboratory for how cities can be built differently.

Process Intervention #2 From m² to m³

Every apartment in Denmark is measured, sold and regulated in square metres. But a square metre with a three-metre ceiling is not the same as a square metre with a 2.6-metre ceiling. One is a room. The other is a completely different experience of space.

OUH's existing buildings offer volumes, heights and spatial configurations that no developer would ever justify building from scratch. What if a group of friends took two floors of the bed tower and designed them as the full volume? A six-metre void. A mezzanine for sleeping. An enormous shared kitchen with views across Odense. Something that would never survive a market analysis, and that people would cross Denmark to live in.

In practice, m³ thinking changes how buildings are parcelled. This requires a different kind of drawing. Not just the floor plan, but the section. Instead of cutting horizontally, one apartment per floor, repeated, units are mapped to the building's existing spatial logic.

A double-height loft spanning two floors. A vaulted structure as a canopy for intergenerational living rather than ordinary apartments. When breaking free from the rule of the square metre, possibilities at OUH will be endless.

Process Intervention #3 Permission to be Different

Building regulations were written for a specific model of housing: individual apartments. Full kitchens. Uniform comfort levels. That model works well for standard new construction but poorly for inhabiting a former hospital.

Vaulted ceilings, double-height laboratories, shared living configurations - BR18 has no category for these. Regulations designed to protect people end up preventing diversity and agency. A community sharing a kitchen on every floor falls outside the rules. A semi-climatised winter garden with insulated sleeping zones is not a recognised dwelling type.

Some standards are non-negotiable: fire safety, structural integrity, basic sanitation. But the question worth asking is which standards truly serve people and the green transition - and which merely enforce sameness.

This is where AGENCY acts as a living laboratory. In close dialogue with authorities, we propose a regulatory sandbox at OUH where alternative configurations can be tested and evaluated. What works here could ripple far beyond OUH.