

OPP: HOUSING & DAILY LIVING

Autism-specific housing for adults

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Purpose. Due to a lack of suitable housing options, many autistic adults continue to live with their parents or family members. Their difficulties with executive functions and communication are often too great for them to live independently. If there are no additional disabilities, residential care homes are not an option for them. Nevertheless, many autistic persons have the desire to shape their own lives. There is a great need for suitable housing options that meet their needs. Furthermore, it is also considered important for a good long-term prognosis (Preißmann, 2022). Considering the aging society, the need for such housing options, which enable autistic persons to live independently, while offering support services that meet their needs, is even greater. Therefore, the design of an autism-specific housing complex for adults was chosen and worked on for a Master's thesis in the master program Inclusive Design – Inclusive Architecture at the Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences. **Method** Based on the findings of systematic literature research, a building project was defined, and architectural aspects for the development of a barrier-free environment for autistic people were compiled. This was mainly based on specific literature and autobiographical case studies of autistic persons and their relatives. Following this, a building site was selected and analyzed. This included an analysis of the urban environment and accessibility in order to demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of the selected location for the chosen building project. An architectural concept for an autism-specific housing complex for adults was then developed based on the findings from the research and analysis. **Results and Discussion** When developing the concept, the previously researched aspects of autism-specific architecture were taken into account with regard to outdoor and green spaces, the design of the rooms, the building furnishings, and the technical building equipment. The consideration of sensory perceptions and behavioral characteristics of autistic persons was also crucial for the development of a concept, as these can be influenced by the physical and sensory environment (Kessel, 2015). Attention was paid to this, for example, it was ensured that functions with the same sensory qualities were arranged coherently and that there were transition areas in between so that the residents could adjust to the new environment. Retreat options, fixed points for easier orientation, and predictability of the building's areas were also taken into account when developing the concept. To avoid an exclusive living concept, the residents of the residential complex should be a heterogeneous group of autistic and non-autistic people. The concept comprises a residential complex consisting of two apartment buildings which are accessed via a shared, sheltered inner courtyard. Support services are available in the form of a service center, an occupational therapist, and a group room for support groups. Housing and support services are spatially separated from each other. The use of these services is not bound to living in the residential complex. Various communal areas with different activities give residents the opportunity to interact socially with each other while retreat rooms are available if required. The green and communal areas were designed with great detail. The housing concept is suitable for adults of all ages. Almost all residential apartments and all communal areas are accessible for persons with disabilities, allowing residents to continue living in their homes into old age. The concept therefore not only meets the needs of autistic persons for a stable place to live (Preißmann, 2017) but also addresses their desire to lead a self-determined life in their own home in old age (Theunissen, 2016).

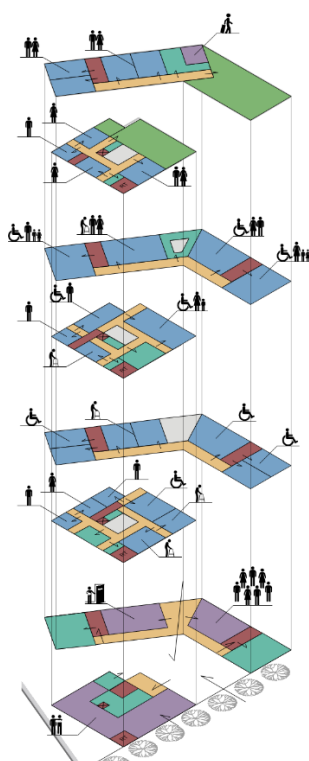
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Legend:	
	Service center/ Occupational therapy/ Group room/ Accommodation for visitors
	Communal areas
	Housing
	Laubengang/ Shared Space
	Vertical development
	Atrium
	Roof terrace

Figure 1. Utilisation concept & possible residents - ground floor to top floor