

# Thinking Big by Living Small

**Space is both a resource and a commodity.  
On a planet with over seven billion people,  
the majority of whom live in teeming megacities,  
land is at a premium.**

**W**hether we live alone or share our homes with our families, the private home is central to our lives. They are retreats within which our weekly routines occur, and hence they contain the potential to contribute fundamentally to the quality of our everyday lives. This book is a collection of excellent examples of how designers and architects, from Europe to Asia, America to Australia, have managed to enhance the standard of life in compact spaces.

During the post-Second World War era the tendency was to build ever-larger private homes as a sign of prosperity. Suddenly the dream of having double garages, saunas, sculleries, guest rooms, and playrooms became realistic for a large number of people in the Western world. The 1970s energy crisis was the first trigger in the return to higher density, more compact living. Increasing heating costs sparked by the energy crisis affected the size of the next generation of single-family houses and apartment buildings.

Starting in the 1990s, gentrification was the next factor to influence compact living. The upgrading of urban fabric in cities might have made them more livable, but at the same time also far more expensive. Poor living standards in inner cities, which had prompted previous generations to dream about suburbia, were eliminated and replaced by green public spaces, bicycle lanes, and harbors for swimming and leisure. The focus of investment shifted

back to compact urban centers. With increasing rental costs many people faced a dilemma that has given birth to a movement of compact living. If you are able to live in a smaller home, then your rental costs will be lower. Each and every square meter counts. Renting or owning a smaller space means you need to earn less money, which results in the possibility of working fewer hours and having more time available. In other words, the luxury of time is a value that can replace the luxury of space if you are willing to live in a smaller, more compact home.

In terms of sustainability, compact living in densely populated areas is the most efficient form of accommodation. When we can share walls, facilities, and public transport, or if work and home is within a reasonable bike ride, then our material and energy consumption will dramatically decrease. So how might it be possible to have a good standard of living in a small amount of space?

## **Privacy in compact homes**

The expectation of privacy and the subdivision of interior spaces varies in different cultures and has a significant impact on how we organize our homes. The following three examples of living might be the result of local climate, culture, and habit, but the ideas inherent within them have great potential for export elsewhere.

