

When Reality Moves In

● **Future of Work & Life** | OBOS Showroom · 1st floor | 12:25–12:40 | 

Part of Compact Living: Less space, more life



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Layout and zoning, not size, decide quality in compact homes

Daniel Silva argued that compact living is a necessity for an affordable housing market in Oslo. His slides showed a 58% decrease in purchasing power for new Oslo home owners between 2010 and 2026: a single first-time buyer could safely afford 59m² in 2010 and 25m² in 2026. By the First Home Index, only 3.9% of the market is available to first-time buyers, and 50% of Oslo's households are single. OBOS estimates this forgotten segment at around 108,000 adults who can afford nothing bigger than about 30 m². OBOS Living Lab is testing six compact apartments from 19.5 m² to 34 m² for one year. The findings so far: residents personalised with colour, materials and items rather than layout, highly specialised storage created friction, and good layout and zoning absorbed most activities.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Zoning and layout were the largest driver of liveability, and zoning added comfort and perceived space.
- Highly specialised storage that misses standard specs created friction; only certain storage helped.
- Residents felt no less ownership; they personalised with colour, materials and items, not layout.
- Common spaces mattered mainly for couples and hosting, as the apartments absorbed more than expected.
- The five ingredients: zoning, symbiotic furnishing, one room per schedule, offloading to common spaces, and layout over size.

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adults in Oslo who can afford nothing bigger than about 30 m² (OBOS estimate)