

# Seeding Community: Collaborative Housing as a Strategy for Social and Neighbourhood Repair

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*The article investigates whether collaborative housing can be a strategy in small-scale neighbourhood renewal. It asks whether this housing type effects the surrounding neighbourhood, whether the foundation for interaction is laid during the development process and what pre-requisites are required. Five international projects, each located within a neighbourhood undergoing transition – shaken by earthquakes, economic woes, and/or demographic changes – are described along with their non-profit developers and the alliances formed to assist in their realization. Here, the term collaborative housing is used and defined as broader than co-housing. Two urban settings are examined: revitalization of existing inner-city structures and urban infill. Aside from the built dimension, collaborative housing has a residential dimension that the examples also portray: intergenerational, senior-friendly, senior and ethnic minority developments. Although the social dimension, development timeline and ongoing requirements of living in collaborative housing appeal to a limited segment of the population, it is an important housing model that can achieve two goals: encourage residents to socialize, care and interact with each other as well as caring, interacting, and modelling community within the neighbourhood.*

Collaborative housing is an international movement, as the names and examples from a variety of countries attest: co-housing in the US, England and Australia; *bofællesskab* in Denmark; *centraal wonen* in Holland; *nachbarschaftliches wohnen* in Germany; *kollektivhus* in Sweden, and *korekutibu haujingu* in Japan. Aside from autonomous housing units and the provision of shared common facilities, including but not limited to kitchen, dining hall and meeting room, this housing type includes a strong social dimension. Before moving in, residents have the intention to balance the privacy of their independent household with the creation of a community in which they will participate (Andersen, 1985; Fromm, 1985; McCamant and Durrett, 1988).

The international spectrum of types, from

low-rise stand-alone communities to those enfolded in larger high-rise developments and the variety of development and ownership types, from those instigated by a group of future residents who own individual units to those created as rentals by non-profit developers, creates a wonderful diversity of options defying easy categorization.

## Terms

In this article, the less restrictive 'collaborative housing' is used as an umbrella term, wide enough to stretch across all international variations. In the classic co-housing developments originating in Denmark, the design encourages social contact, residents have a strong participation role in the development process, complete management of their com-

munity, and typically share dining on a weekly basis, among other defining criteria (McCamant and Durrett, 1988; Fromm, 1991). These factors add to the creation of a strong community, but other housing models, funding restrictions, the long non-profit development cycle, the restrictive diets of some older residents, less interest in attending social gatherings and any other of a number of reasons create examples slightly outside the more restrictive definition of co-housing that are, nevertheless, worth investigating.

These include sister developments on the borders of co-housing, sharing many traits, but where residents do not eat together on a weekly basis, and where the future residents may not have been the instigators of the development. Non-profit organizations often play a role in their development and management, spurred by their missions of social assistance and the benefits they hope that collaboration can provide.

### **The Role of Social Capital**

Social capital<sup>1</sup> and the resources it provides are a key to the workings of this housing type. Residents rely on other residents for social contact and to help out in small but important ways in daily life, such as going out to a show or exercising together, providing a lift, or, for an unwell resident, purchasing groceries. Knowing each other, a collaborative community can provide greater security when noticing and querying a stranger passing through, or help and social support in a difficult time.

Much has been written about collaborative housing's ability to ease residents' daily living tasks and improve residential social contact within a self-created community (McCamant and Durrett, 1988; Fromm, 1991; Vestbro, 2010); less so on their effects on the larger neighbourhood as a stabilizing and instigating force, in the provision of services, or as an aid to the needs of specific groups of residents. Yet a well-functioning collaborative community can be a model of

good neighbouring within the larger neighbourhood, providing eyes on the street, involved in the politics of the community and pitching in during difficult times.

### **The Article's Intent**

First, this article looks at whether a collaborative housing development has an effect on the larger neighbourhood. Using urban revitalization and infill examples, can it be an effective strategy for neighbourhoods that are marginalized, in disrepair, or ageing?

Second, does the development process create a foundation for the future community's interaction and concern with the surrounding neighbourhood? The examples focus on non-profit developers or for-profit developers that have a non-profit history. Such entities' mission statements have traditionally placed a greater emphasis on the larger neighbourhood, and also have included many local alliances to realize their projects.

Finally, what are prerequisites to encourage the collaborative 'engine' to impact positively not only residents within their self-created community but beyond to the neighbourhood?

Five international examples, with different developmental and collaborative configurations (figure 1), illustrate a range of scenarios.

### **1. Urban Revitalization**

Two examples follow of giving new life and vigour to the existing assets of a community. In each case a developer of affordable housing worked with a residential group that self-formed before moving in, adding a strong proponent's voice to project creation. The residents, from various income levels, chose to move into neighbourhoods with high crime rates and vandalism that, individually, may have given them pause. Now living in successful intergenerational developments, each group continues to be involved in their neighbourhood.

Description	Mano, Kobe	Swan's Market, Oakland, CA	KanKan Mori, Tokyo	Geothestrasse, Bremerhaven	Foe Ooi Leeuw, Amsterdam
Urban revitalization		✓		✓	
Urban infill	✓		✓		✓
Project began	1995	1994	2000	2002	1997
Site located and/or construction	1996	1995	2002	2004	2005
Move in	1997	2000	2003	2005	2009
Units/size	29; 34–58.5 m <sup>2</sup>	20; 63–142 m <sup>2</sup>	29; 24–62 m <sup>2</sup>	10; 54–95 m <sup>2</sup>	56; 79–90 m <sup>2</sup>
<i>Physical Setting</i>					
Common facilities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Separate private households (incl. kitchen and bath)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Design emphasizing social contact	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Developer</i>					
Non-profit housing developer	✓	✓			✓
For profit housing developer			✓	✓	
<i>Collaborative Instigator</i>					
Self-organized core group		✓		✓	
Non-profit organization	✓		✓		✓
For profit developer			✓		✓
<i>Community Organization</i>					
Informal exchanges of services among residents	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Regular residential meetings/gatherings	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Separate household economies	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Decision-Making</i>					
Non-hierarchical structure and decision-making	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Non-profit oversight in decision-making	✓				
<i>Maintenance</i>					
Resident managed and maintained	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Non-profit manage and maintained					✓
<i>Group Activities</i>					
The provision of one or more weekly common meals		✓	✓		
Use of common space on a weekly basis		✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Intention</i>					
Shared community vision/intention		✓	✓	✓	✓
To live inclusively (as opposed to isolated from the world), neighbourly and securely	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Provide neighbourly assistance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Figure 1. Comparison of the five collaborative housing examples.

### Co-housing at Swan's Market, USA

**Alliances and organizations supporting Swan's Market development:**

*California Housing Finance Agency* – Support for first-time low-income homebuyers

*Community Economics* – Financial consultant to non-profit organizations

*East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation (EBALDC)* – Non-profit community housing developer

*Oakland Heritage Alliance* – Advocates for Oakland's cultural resources

*Oakland Office of Historic Preservation* – Protection of historic resources

*Oakland Redevelopment Agency* – Provider of initial funding to revitalize blighted areas

*Pyatok Architects* – Specialists in affordable housing

*The Cohousing Company* – A private cohousing developer

Swan's Market dates back to 1917, when a small version opened in downtown Oakland, selling fresh produce on the north – the shady

side – of the City's main shopping promenade, Washington Street, which stretched down to the waterfront, across the Bay from San Francisco. The popularity of the market annexed neighbouring buildings, one after another, into the mix; soon the entire block, with seventeen buildings, provided all-under-one-roof shopping, a precursor to the modern supermarket (figure 2).

The Great Depression dampened those times in Oakland and elsewhere. In the 1950s and 1960s residents left for suburban havens and the downtown shopping slowly melted and disappeared. Preceding the century's end, urban renewal arrived, laying two new freeways that split the old downtown from the waterfront. Around Swan's Market, re-development dollars also consolidated into a new convention centre superblock that presented a blank wall, the length of two football pitches, towards the Market. Rather than new life for surrounding streets, these



Figure 2. Historic Swan's Market in 1939.

new developments were like boulders stopping the flow of the old downtown. In 1984, Swan's closed and the site remained empty.

#### *Deterioration and Earthquake*

Downtown Oakland's downward spiral was both physical and social. The abandoned site was but one of many; parts of the downtown were seen as blighted areas with a reputation for crime. 'It was not perceived as a safe area, particularly at night. Nothing was open past 6 pm so if you wanted to get a drink, or go to a café, nothing', explained Joani Blank, one of the originators of the co-housing group.

The big Loma Prieta Earthquake in 1989 destroyed a number of Oakland buildings and added further deterioration to the Market; the quake spurred the Oakland Redevelopment Agency to purchase the 1.4 acre (0.56 ha) site. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), through the Community Planning and Development Division, provided funds. HUD representative James A. Myers, on Swan's Market: 'This boarded-up eyesore was a constant reminder of a once thriving heart of downtown that now lay abandoned and in decay...This site, perhaps more than others in Oakland ... represented ... hopelessness, neglect and abandonment'. (Ruby Bruner, 2001).

After it had been empty for over a decade,

the intention of razing Swan's Market was sidetracked when a local non-profit developer became interested in saving the property. Swan's Market is located a few blocks from one of the oldest Chinatowns in the US; the East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation, known as EBALDC (pronounced e-bald-see), had been created around the successful effort to rescue a local ageing Chinatown landmark. EBALDC's goal for Swan's, beyond saving the historic buildings, was to create a pebble effect whose ripples would radiate out and bring life to surrounding blocks; the diametrically opposite effect of the large developments going on at the time.

A co-housing core group had self-formed and was actively seeking a site in downtown. They became a part of EBALDC's mixed-use proposal for the site (figure 3). Joshua Simon, EBALDC's project developer for Swan's explained, 'At the time, Swan's with market rate housing, no one would have viewed this as a rational act. The amenities of downtown were not supportive, an understatement, of enticing middle-class homeowners'. The redevelopment agency chose EBALDC, in part because their proposal had a committed co-housing group who stated 'we have houses in the best neighbourhoods in Oakland and we want to buy into downtown, we want to be the next generation of that



Figure 3. Swan's Market, site plan. The cohousing entrance and common garden are located on the ground floor, off Swan's court. The condominium entrances are located on the second floor. (Source: Pyatok Architects)

community', said Simon and added, 'that was a powerful starting point for creating community'.

The co-housing group created a limited liability corporation that loaned money to aid the project's development and actively supported the inclusion of affordable housing rather than the more typical NIMBY attitude. 'They went to the city council and said we want the city to build affordable housing next to us', said Simon.

EBALDC hired Pyatok Architects and YH Lee Architects to guide the overall development. In addition the core group hired The Cohousing Company, a for-profit co-housing developer/architect, for guidance (McCamant and Durrett, 2011). The Cohousing Company worked on the common areas of the co-housing project with the future residents; they recruited new potential residents through-

out much of the development process so that all twenty units were pre-sold before the project was completed.

### Design

The design strove to save as much of the historic structure as possible; about 75 per cent of the basic structure was left in place. Pyatok Architects peeled back the roof to insert the co-housing units on the second floor (figure 4). The future residents needed to be quite flexible about the design in order to make it work both spatially and financially. Project manager Peter Waller of Pyatok Architects: 'we were able to include more housing, actually making room for common kitchen and dining, because the housing could be made denser'. Working closely with the group and The Cohousing Company,

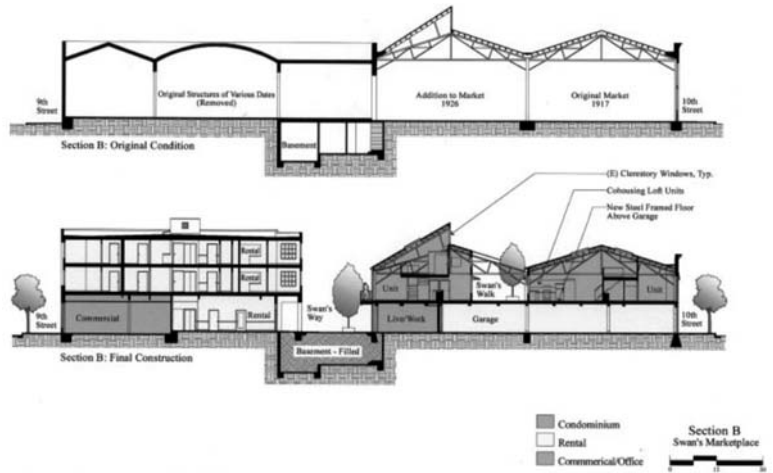


Figure 4. Section showing mix of programme uses. Cohousing units are located on the second floor, right. (Source: Pyatok Architects)



Figure 5. The narrow central pedestrian street separating the two rows of units works well and allowed the housing to fit within the framework of the historic trusses.

Waller laid out a common ‘street’ with a width of 17 ft (5.2 m) door to door, 12 ft (3.7 m) at its narrowest (figure 5). Co-housing resident Michael Coleman recalled the architect asking ‘is this going to work?’ and we said ‘yes’.

Many other untypical design moves made the insertion of co-housing work. The architect felt that the co-housing residents took more risks in unit design and open space,

as well as agreeing to pay extra for a front garden rather than having two more units added into the courtyard as the developer suggested (figure 6). ‘The terrace would have been too public (for typical housing) and the front garden is a wonderful addition for the courtyard’, adds Waller. The co-housing overlook works well, and brings a sense of community and supervision to the public courtyard. ‘Would we design



Figure 6. The cohousing garden provides greenery and a sense of openness to Swan's court, a shared public courtyard. It also acts as a soft buffer and an identity for the cohousing within the mixed-use development.



Figure 7. A renovated Swan's Market with cohousing and low-income housing, office and commercial space brought new life to the neighbourhood. (Source: Pyatok Architects)

like this with unrelated households? No', declared Waller.

The co-housing works well in providing appropriately designed space in-between the private units – the common 'street' and terrace – and in-between the co-housing community and the larger development – the common garden. Both terrace and garden look directly out into Swan's court, which is open to the public.

Completed in 2000, the twenty units of co-housing are one part of the \$20 million

mixed-use development that also includes eighteen affordable housing units in a separate building,<sup>2</sup> office space (17,400 ft<sup>2</sup> [1,617 m<sup>2</sup>]), retail and restaurants (26,800 ft<sup>2</sup> [2,490 m<sup>2</sup>]) and the Museum of Children's Art (figure 7).

The co-housing community has been successful and stable; the turnover rate is low. Of the twenty households that originally moved in, fifteen have remained over the past 12 years, and many are active in the community. Co-housing residents support

the neighbourhood by participating on the board of the Children’s Museum (MOCHA); allowing use of their common space for occasional neighbourhood meetings, and participating in the Old Oakland Neighborhood Association.

Myers, from HUD, talking about the entire Swan’s Market development pointed out that

what distinguishes [it] from other adaptive reuse projects is its social environment, not just its well designed, restored and constructed physical features... It is a place where you get to know each other’s names, strike-up casual conversations and feel secure at home in the neighbourhood... Swan’s Market does make the community a better place to live.

The project has won five awards, including the Ruby Bruner Award for projects that ‘provide innovative models for addressing some of our country’s most persistent urban ills’.

Collaborative housing, part of a larger development, was a useful tool in that it introduced a pioneering group of mixed-income homeowners; they created an economic base and measure of comfort to what was perceived as an economic gamble; the collaborative design embraced the historic context and mixed use, adding a green open area to the shared public court rather than a barricaded building; and the community actively participates in neighbourhood activities and politics. As project manager Simon noted, ‘Co-housing is like the sourdough starter for bread that gets things going. If you want to build community in an area that lacks community, there is nothing more powerful – it is an excellent strategy to increase civic engagement’.

### Neighbourly Living on Goethe Street, Germany

#### Alliances and organizations supporting Goethestrasse development:

(*Stäwog Städtische Wohnungsgesellschaft Bremerhaven mbH*) – the municipal housing association of Bremerhaven, developer,

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manager and designer (Sieghard Lückehe, their architect)  
*VHS (Volkshochschule Bremerhaven)* – The local adult school, offering classes in collaborative housing  
*Stadtplanungsamt Bremerhaven* – Office of urban planning  
*Amt für Bauförderung* – Agency for construction support  
*Senator für das Bauwesen* – Regional authorities (Senate) for the building industry  
*Landesamt für Denkmalpflege* – Department for the preservation of historical buildings

#### Financing:

Federal State of Bremen – Public funding  
 Federal State Bank – Low-interest financing

The collaborative housing group on Goethestrasse in the town of Bremerhaven made a similar commitment to a neighbourhood in decline. Their building is located in a dense urban area, Lehe, with a concentration of unemployed residents and immigrants. The Lehe District reflects a number of areas in Germany that have been struggling to address economic and demographic shifts. In this neighbourhood, 12 per cent of the buildings are vacant, with an overall 16 per cent vacancy rate for the district.<sup>3</sup>

An alternative ‘patchwork’ redevelopment strategy combining local and government support to intervene in deteriorating neighbourhoods had been carried out in a selected number of German cities.<sup>4</sup> Within Lehe, such interventions include consolidating and improving schools, creating a cultural and events programme, and helping disadvantaged youth (Karsten, 2010). While the co-housing was not a formal part of the urban restructuring programme, the residents support the other interventions and act as a ‘good neighbour’ model.

Lehe was not the neighbourhood in the minds of a small co-housing group that had self-formed in Bremerhaven to discuss how they would like to live, supporting each other, especially as they grew older. To



attract interested individuals and grow the group, they organized a forum for discussion through the local adult school. In 2003, group members organized three events through the school, and grew to about twenty to twenty-five people. Having focused and formulated their plans, they submitted them to local housing associations.

'We found the idea very interesting as a pilot project', explained Christian Bruns, the director of Ståwog, the municipal housing association of Bremerhaven.<sup>5</sup> 'We had begun to address the rising problem of abandoned housing in Lehe, and had approached building authorities and contacted other building owners to help improve the overall housing conditions.'

Ståwog suggested the group move into a historic building that the housing association had acquired in Lehe (figure 8). The building's interior had been vandalized, used at times by homeless people as a temporary

shelter. The building did not come close to meeting the group's vision. Aside from its dilapidated state, with broken doors and torn-out toilets on the balcony, the building size was far less than they needed, with a tiny back yard. However, seven households committing to moving in.

Impressive modernization was undertaken by Ståwog that included ten accessible apartments, the addition of an elevator, and the removal of the old running-balcony for new separated balconies to create private outdoor space (figure 9). Common space, requested by the resident group, included two rooms on the spacious ground floor, a fish shop years prior, that were turned into the kitchen area, and another large room became the shared living and gathering area, with a bathroom and guest space (figure 10). The first households moved into the building in June 2005.

Ståwog manages the building with each household under a rental contract;<sup>6</sup> the residents pay for these common spaces by a slight increase in their monthly rent. Residents can rent space for themselves in addition to their own units. Ann Grüttert, a resident, and two other painters, not a part of the group, divide the rent on one spacious room that is used as an artist's studio. Two residents pay for a wood workshop. This rent-a-common-space works because of the extra rooms available on the ground floor; those residents who are not interested in the particular common amenity do not pay the rent for the space. Residents renovated the spacious attic, working together to install insulation and flooring, and they have turned it into an exercise room.

Wolf Truhart and his wife Ann-Marie, founding members, were seeking greater support and social contact as they grew older. Here, residents get together two or three times a week for coffee, and eat dinner together every other month. They also do activities with each other, and several households travel together, visiting other countries.

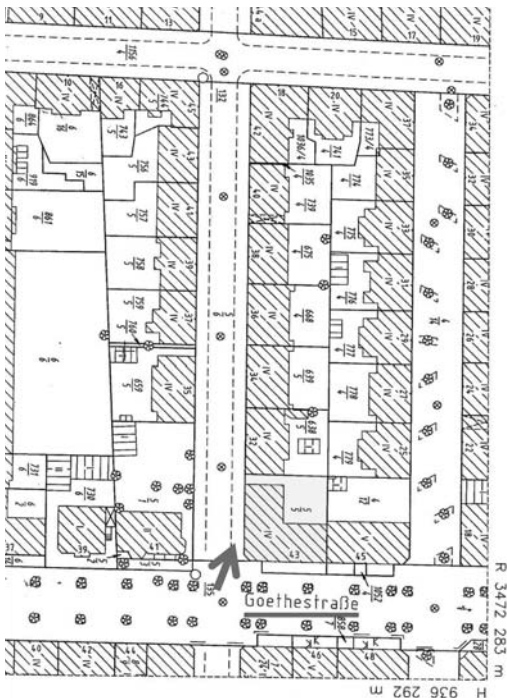


Figure 8. Site plan with arrow pointing to the Goethestrasse apartment building, at one corner of a dense urban housing block. (Source: Ståwog)



Figure 9. The dilapidated building underwent a complete renovation, including an elevator addition to create an accessible building. The old balconies (*left*) were removed and new balconies added for private outdoor space. (*Source*: Ståwog)

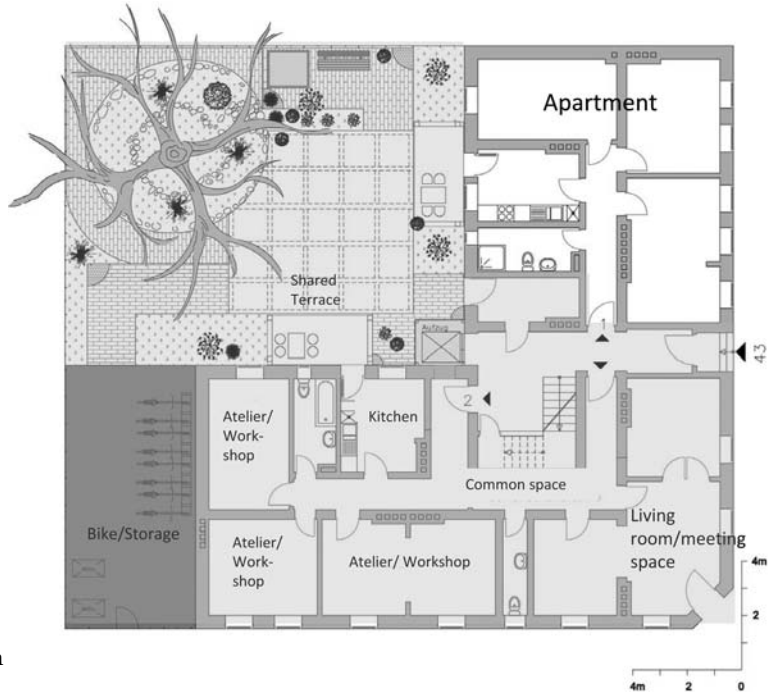


Figure 10. Ground floor common space. (*Source*: Ståwog)

Newcomers to the area, Lars and Angela Kindermann and their two young daughters, felt there were pluses in moving into the neighbourhood although they were warned against it. 'We didn't know anyone, and found these very welcoming neighbours.' With two young children, the innovative educational opportunities<sup>7</sup> that had recently been created in Lehe were important, and the family acquired 'instant' supportive neighbours when moving into collaborative housing.

'We came from Berlin and I like to live in this complicated district because of my politics', explains Lars. 'Sometimes we work together with neighbours for poor children and we volunteer. Although there are groups of young men who at times congregate, when residents walk by them they say "hello".' So far residents' cars are untouched. 'In the more posh areas, it's even more dangerous to get your house robbed', believes Lars. 'In Berlin I felt much more insecure in a middle-class neighbourhood.'

Lars has connected all the households to the internet and maintains the system. Wolf teaches Lars's girls to play the piano; artist

Ann paints with them; and Helle, on the first day of the girls' summer vacation, had been busy crocheting each a little bag for their ball, as they had requested. 'They're so sweet; I was filled with joy because I was with them', Helle said. While not every resident involves themselves with the children, a large number clearly enjoy doing so.

The multigenerational house has five couples, one with two children, and five singles. Twelve of the residents are over 55, making this project 'senior friendly'. The youngsters interact with the senior residents, and vice versa, an important connection in their day-to-day lives. Given the small size of the outdoor area, and the density of units, increasing the number of young residents would have a noticeable effect in terms of community focus, noise and activity (figure 11).

'We moved here because of the other residents, not the surroundings', mentioned several residents. Being multigenerational was clearly seen as a plus. 'People are the bricks and mortar', Wolf reflected. 'We are happy to have a younger family because we want a living house, not just quiet and comfort.'



Figure 11. Goethestrasse's senior-friendly community where residents over 50 years old predominate. The small size of the outdoor space would be difficult to share if many young children lived in the building.

*Expanding the Model*

Stäwog is supporting more collaborative housing because it addresses two important goals: caring and involvement within the neighbourhood and encouraging residents to socialize, care for and interact with each other. They do not see downsides once the residents have moved in. The unit rental in both cases is to individual households, and the common spaces could be turned back into an apartment with minimal effort. Stäwog sees advantages: 'the residents take care of the garden and front yard themselves; conflicts and disputes among the tenants do not reach us as landlord and the entire facility is very well-tended because the residents care (figure 12); and also the fluctuation of tenants is very low with few moving out over time'.

But getting to the stage of moving is not typically a smooth or quick process as the group needs to decide among themselves about location, size, common rooms, rentals or home ownership. The national association FGV (Forum Gemeinschaftliches Wohnen e. V.), Forum for Collaborative Housing, initiates bringing people together to create

self-organized community housing projects.

Norbert Friedrich, City Planning Office, Bremerhaven, explained that their plan to improve disadvantaged districts is a policy of integration and cooperation among all types of city organizations. 'We believe that the housing project at Goethestrasse helps to improve the neighbourhood ... in this area of Lehe (figure 13). We have plans for further projects in Lehe and Geestemünde (another district in need of support)', explained Friedrich.

The folk high school is providing a forum for like-minded people in a pilot project funded by the Federal Ministry, with the Goethestrasse residents helping. 'After six wonderful years, we'd like others to know that it's worth it. You just need some courage and determination', explains resident Ann Marie.

## 2. Urban Infill

Collaborative housing can be created as new construction on vacant or underutilized sites within an already built-up area. These types of infill developments add density within



Figure 12. Goethestrasse residents spend time in front of their building; they maintain the property, including the plantings. (Source: Stäwog)



Figure 13. While abandoned buildings, trash and graffiti remain a neighbourhood problem, foreground, the renovated Goethestrasse building across the street, acts as a counterbalance. (Source: Stäwog)

an existing neighbourhood, and can benefit from already-existing site amenities, easy access to public transport and shopping. Infill developments can also be a way to provide special services or amenities to both residents and the wider community. The following examples describe three infill housing experiments. All involve seniors: one, privately developed, has an intergenerational 'collective house' built on several floors of a senior housing tower; one is subsidized government-sponsored senior housing for city repair; and the last example focuses on providing support to ethnic minorities who have difficulty accessing care.

Collaborative developments are good models for supporting ageing, and many successful examples of senior collaborative housing exist, including senior co-housing developed and managed by residents in Denmark and the Netherlands, and a growing number being developed in Sweden, Germany, and the US (Durrett, 2005).

That this type of housing will appeal to limited numbers of elderly and that there are a number of development requirements also need to be considered. Organizations and municipalities with large senior constituents have particular interest in this model because of the benefits of social contact and support

implied in collaborative housing. Some have built experimental projects, but not all function as successfully as hoped.

Japan, a country whose senior population (over age 65) is projected to be one in four citizens before 2020, is actively seeking new models for ageing. In the city of Tokyo, more than 22 per cent of residents are 65 and over, projected to almost double to over 40 per cent of the population by 2050.

Urban seniors are vulnerable to isolation as traditional patterns of care change and growing numbers of elderly parents are no longer taken care of by their adult children. Japan also has a scarcity of caretakers; many elders living longer lives but needing some assistance, a number with chronic health conditions, cannot find affordable care. The gender gap – a significantly higher percentage of women do not work compared to Western countries – has implications on both income and health benefits, including entitlement to care and welfare services.

Vitally important not only for seniors but for the country's social cohesion, are the development of alternative services for ageing that allow seniors the housing and care they need, a social and supportive environment, and that provide opportunities to bring young and old together.

## Intergenerational infill – Kankan Mori Collective House, Japan

### Alliances and organizations supporting KanKan Mori's development:

*Collective Housing Corporation* – A non-profit developer acting as community facilitator and coordinator of residents' participatory design

*Collective House, Inc.* – Sub-leasing entity consisting mainly of residential members, since 2006

*Seikatsu Kagaku Unei Co Ltd* – A developer and manager of independent and assisted senior housing and owner of *KanKan Mori*

*Ikuko Koyabe* – General manager for the project and the spatial design

*Tadashi Toyama* – Advisor, LAU Kokyo Shisetsu Facility Institute, Architecture and Engineering

'Community is disappearing, even in the rural areas. When I grew up, we had my grandmother, parents and my sisters and brothers all living in our house. When my father passed away, the community helped me and helped my mother. But things have changed. I lived in a big Tokyo apartment building but I didn't know anyone', explained Yoshie Sakamoto, age 72, about her impetus

for moving into Tokyo's first 'collective house', KanKan Mori.

The collaborative housing is located on two floors of a twelve-storey building called Nippori Community House, in Arakawa Ward. A former middle school was razed, and the new building built to accommodate residents from cradle to grave. Under its roof, aside from the Collective House with intergenerational residents, is Life House for independent seniors with limited support services; Senior House, similar to a nursing home with total care services, plus an open-to-the-public day nursery, health clinic and restaurant (figure 14). 'The idea', explains Ikuko Koyabe, Professor at Japan Women's University and one of the project instigators, 'is to promote better communication within ... especially between senior residents in Life House and the relatively younger residents in Kankan Mori, as well as with the neighbourhood'.

The developer, owner, and manager of the building, Seikatsu Kagaku Unei, a for-profit company, has been developing nursing homes in Japan for 20 years. The company's founder, deeply interested in cooperative living for many years, believed that the collaborative model would help achieve a

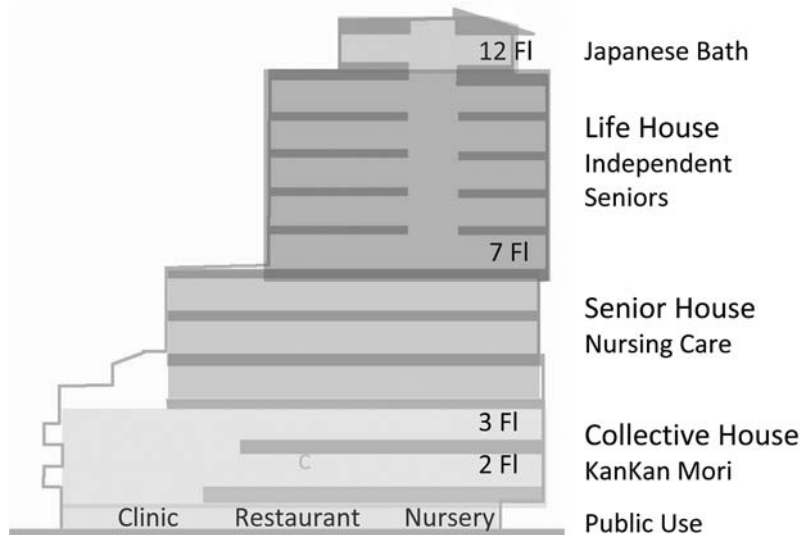


Figure 14. Section of Nippori Community, with KanKan Mori located on the second and third floor.

real community. He teamed up with the Collective Housing Corporation (CHC), a non-profit organization that opened in 2001 to promote collective housing. CHC's first project in Japan was a shared housing infill site, Syoin Commons (2002).<sup>8</sup>

CHC began working with a group of future residents on the design of their two floors, in-fill into the building shell. The group, a mix of ages, met thirty-two times throughout the development process (Maeda and Ohgaki, 2010) and discussed many aspects of how they should organize and support each other.

Kankan Mori No Kaze (The Winds of Kankanmori Forest) opened in 2003 with twenty-nine apartments (24–62 m<sup>2</sup>) and 166 m<sup>2</sup> of shared facilities that include a common kitchen, living and dining room, laundry, and a terrace and garden on the second floor (figure 15). Kankan Mori residents form committees to manage and maintain their floors. They also cook, in rotating teams of two to three residents, two shared evening meals a week in the common kitchen. Residents are required to help with the cooking,

help clean the common facilities, and join a committee; there are once-a-month management meetings.

Kankan Mori residents' ages divide up into thirds: those over sixty, those under twenty and those in-between. New members are recruited from a waiting list. Like many rental co-housing communities in Europe, there is a quietly accepted fact that new younger members are harder to recruit and keep; there is no shortage of interested seniors.<sup>9</sup> Families may have some reluctance towards moving in because of the higher than usual rental costs and lack of highly regarded school choices for the children in this non-residential area. In addition, fathers and husbands are not often drawn to the added effort involved in collaboration as many work extraordinarily long hours.

'It is a very special lifestyle; it's not so easy to handle and manage a collective house, not so easy. It's a model popular on paper – they know it's a good system of living – but it's not so easy to live here. The younger people have to work (at their jobs) till 10 or 11 in the evening', explains one of the residents.



Figure 15. Common areas in tint on the 2nd Floor Plan. (Source: CHC)

There are no plans as yet for another Nappori Community. One reason is that the model is not quick to replicate. Members involved in the design process need time to get to know each other and figure out their community before moving in. Because of its newness in Japan, private developers not well acquainted with the needs and requirements of this type of housing may be reluctant to embrace it. Another reason may be the limited socializing between the 'houses'.

While KanKan Mori's interior community functions well, their direct involvement, formally as a group, with the residents of the senior housing has been limited. Koyabe explained that although KanKan Mori residents are quite open to Life House residents and the neighbourhood, they are also quite busy in their daily lives. They do assist the staff during seasonal events like spring and autumn festivals. Only a few residents of the other housing types have expressed interest in joining the activities of KanKan Mori. Initially, the KanKan Mori residents attended a workshop on sharing the bath/spa but the senior residents were reluctant, concerned about young people's noise and boisterousness. KanKan Mori residents do make use of the restaurant and the clinic and have also had infants in the nursery.

A KanKan Mori couple who wanted more assistance with daily chores chose to move into the owner's assisted living, but one located outside the Tokyo Metropolitan area as the cost of care was not as high. Other older co-housing residents feel similar to resident Yoshie Sakamoto: 'I don't want to move to a nursing home or elderly housing... I can get assistance through the public system. I'm very satisfied living in this collective house and I want to stay and live here till I die'.

### Post-Earthquake Housing for Seniors

KanKan Mori was not the first of Japan's Collective Housing. In the 1980s and 1990s,

several Japanese researchers travelled to Sweden, staying in and researching Swedish collaborative housing or *Kollektivhus*. The Nordic term is therefore also used to describe Japan's collaborative housing. The Great Hanshin Earthquake in 1995 spurred interest in this housing type. Interdisciplinary professionals organized to support the emergence of alternative housing for elderly survivors. The government lent its support to experimenting with collaborative living on a grand scale, constructing over 300 units. The first of these was Mano.

### Post Earthquake Experiments in Kobe: Mano Fureai Jutaku (Mano Collaborative Housing)

#### Alliances and organizations supporting Mano's development:

*Kobe City Collective Housing Study Group (Kobe-shi Korekutibu Haujingu Kenkyukai)* – Consists of city housing department, Kobe city housing development agency, city planners, and academics

*Mano Collective Housing Research Group (Mano Korekutibu Haujingu Kenkyukai)* – (In 1996, after Mano chosen as the site) Founded by and composed of architects, urban planners, social welfare specialists, scholars, and city employees, from both the private and public sectors

*Mano Fureai Jutaku Entrant Discussion Group (Mano Fureai Jutaku Kyojusha Nyukyosha Kondankai)* – facilitated meetings with future residents on living in and managing Mano, before building completed.

*Fureai Jutaku Kyojyusha Koryukai* – a group of residents living among all *fureai jutaku*s, in ten different districts, who exchange experiences and ideas about collective living

*Kobe City Housing Bureau (Kobe-shi Jutaku Kyoku)* – responsible for the city's administration of the residence. (Now the Kobe-shi Toshi Keikaku So-Kyoku Jutaku-Bu – Kobe City Urban Planning and Housing Bureau, Housing Department)

*Collective Housing Promotion Assistance Association (Korekutibu Hausing Jigyo Suishin Oendan)* – consists of planners, architects, doctors, social welfare workers, scholars, government officials, and volunteers in multiple fields, plus others



A large and busy port city, Kobe is located west of Osaka on the main island of Honshū. The entire area suffered from the devastations of the January 1995 earthquake that killed over 6,000 people. The damage has been estimated at \$100 billion; about 250,000 houses were destroyed (Yasui, 2009).

An inner-city area where over 30 per cent of the population are seniors, Kobe's Mano district had a quarter of all housing units destroyed, leaving many homeless, often single seniors. The typical temporary housing built right after the quake did not meet their needs for access and care, and did not help foster a sense of community, which had been literally destroyed.

Mano had a history of community organization and development, and housing the elderly became a priority. Alternatives and models were discussed and considered. A multi-disciplined study group made up of professionals and proponents for collaborative housing began to meet after the quake to create models within the government's public housing facilities (Machizukuri, 1999; Ishito and Collective Oendan, 2000).

The City founded the Association for the Study of Mano Collective Housing consisting of architects, social welfare workers, scholars, and government officials. 'In order to prepare the basic plan, the city held pseudo (mock)-workshops, which were workshops with local residents who were supposed to be similar to prospective residents, in addition to study meetings, and used their feedback for the preparation of the essential features of the plan', explained Izumi Shiota, from the City of Kobe's Department of Housing Policy.

A variety of design ideas that fostered community was incorporated into the plan for 'Fureai Jutakus' (*fureai* literally means touching and implies care, friendship and interaction; *jutakus* means housing). In May 1996, a site was found, and construction began in 1997 on Mano, the first of the Fureai Jutakus.

Social gatherings with potential residents

of Mano were held to attract residents and to discuss issues of management and administration. The City also implemented 'group registration' expecting that those households who would move in as a group would create a solid core of cooperative life.

The future residents, as required for disaster replacement housing, were chosen through a public application process. They met seven times, from July to December of 1997, to get to know one another and to discuss how they wanted to manage and live in this new type of housing. They decided on rules, and selected common-area furniture, among other activities. An eight-member resident board was created to oversee the residents, once moved in, with some assistance from the Collective Housing support group, Jigyo Suishin Oendan.

In December 1997 Mano Fureai-Jutaku opened, part of the government subsidized emergency housing programme. The area where Mano was constructed has a '*shitamachi*' history, a downtown area special to Japan where residential, commercial, and small factories sit side by side, connected by '*roji*', narrow alleyways. The common people's downtown, *shitamachis* are lively areas in Japanese cities with a history going back to feudal times.

Trying to capture some of that past cultural history, the three-storey Mano Fureai-Jutaku has a design of extended covered balconies reminiscent of the alleyways where people met and talked (figure 16). The twenty-nine unit development has twenty-one 'Silver Housing' units, which include features for ageing in place and the provision of some social services.<sup>10</sup> The common indoor space, 200 m<sup>2</sup>, consists of common living room, dining, kitchen, and meeting space, plus bathroom, located centrally on the ground floor.

The Mano residents use their common facilities, though not as regularly as anticipated, and enjoy hanging out along the alley-like balconies. The residents share breakfast several times a month and also, once a

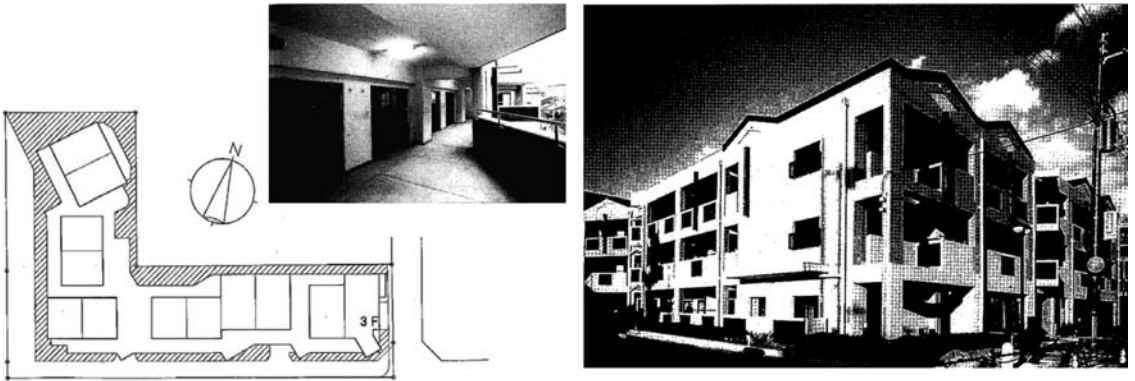


Figure 16. Building façade of Mano Fureai-Jutaku. The wide balcony-like passages are located on the second and on the third floor, shown; the common rooms are located on the ground floor. (Source: City of Kobe)

month, there is lunch cooked by residents with outside volunteers. Events occur in the common areas and movies are shown once a month (Maeda and Ohgaki, 2010).

Mano is one of ten different types of collective housing developments built in Hyogo prefecture, a total of 341 living units.<sup>11</sup> In these projects, the housing designs vary in creating ways for neighbours to meet casually, including a shared alleyway, a shared courtyard, and a shared room to change street shoes to house shoes. These projects are also mostly ‘Silver Housing’ in combination with other types of housing. As in Mano, residents in the other collaborative communities share breakfast a couple of times a month, and sometimes share a catered lunch or plan a dinner together.

This government experiment had mixed results, as a questionnaire-based study, conducted ten years after construction, reveals (Sekikawa *et al.*, 2006). The Kyoto University of Education study describes nine of the collective houses built by the government, including Mano. The average resident, whose age is over 70, said that their primary reason for living in the housing is the affordable rent. The survey shows varying degrees of resident satisfaction. About 80 per cent said they used the common space at least once a month but only about 50 per cent were satisfied with it. Reasons for dissatisfaction include: ‘don’t

use’; ‘cost’; ‘not necessary (individual unit gets smaller)’; ‘not convenient to use’; ‘only certain people use’; and ‘maintenance work, such as cleaning, is a burden’.<sup>12</sup>

The intent of the residents in moving into the community (affordability), their limited involvement in the design and construction phases (chosen after building completion), and limited assistance for creating common activities (given the age, income, and lack of similar living experiences), probably all played a role. Shiota noted: ‘Since Mano Fureai Housing is public housing ... most residents are low-income and elderly people. Therefore, their priority is to keep their lives stable and it is difficult to maintain the community’. He added that ‘meal parties and seasonal events were held with the support from volunteers’; but that the number of events reduced due to both the increasing age of residents and the decreasing number who were familiar with the development process.

The 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake (off the coast of Tohoku) again is arousing interest in collaborative living and it will be interesting to see what new models and methods emerge.

In Japan, much has been learned in the intervening years about development of collective housing. Kankan Mori was followed by three other Collective Houses: Sugamoflat (2007) on the second floor of an

existing fourteen-storey apartment building; Sessiki (2009) in a two-storey privately owned building; and, most recently, Oizumi (2010) in a converted dormitory for labourers. All are located in the Tokyo area, have an intergenerational mix of residents, with a mix of incomes. But how can lower income ageing residents in need of services equally benefit from this housing type? One answer can be found in Holland.

### 3. Collaborative Housing for Ethnic Minorities

Collaborate housing can create strong community, but it clearly cannot be assumed to do so without a strong social process in place. The following Dutch example of *centraal wonen* (collaborative housing) illustrates how a group of diverse Asian immigrants, who did not share a common language, were effectively brought together as a collaborative community through an arts-focused process initiated and supported by nonprofit organizations.

#### Foe Ooi Leeuw Centraal Wonen, the Netherlands

##### Alliances and organizations supporting Foe Ooi Leeuw's development:

*Amsterdam Southeast District/Project Renewal Bijlmermeer* – redevelopment agency  
*CABO* – a health care organization that advises older people on policy and deals with migrant elderly health  
*Deltaforte* – the project developer who hired the architect, HVDN  
*Foundation Foe Ooi Leeuw* – representing residents' interests  
*Rochdale* – a non-profit housing association that manages the project as a rental  
*OsiraGroup* – a service provider for seniors  
*Tung Lok Society* – Chinese Elderly Association that instigated the project

##### Art/Design:

*Cultural Enterprise (Cultuur-Ondernemen)* – Offers the opportunity for public institutions

*continued in next column*

*continued from previous column*

to use arts and culture to solve complex organizational issues (previously Artists & Co.)

*HVDN Architecten + Studioninedots* – The project architects

*Mondriaan Foundation (Kunsten en de Mondriaan)* – International promotion fund for visual arts, design and cultural heritage

*The Amsterdam Art Fund (Amsterdams*

*Fonds voor de Kunsten)* – Financed by the

Municipality of Amsterdam, the Fund

provides financial support for art projects of individual artists and organizations

Foe Ooi Leeuw (pronounced Foo ewe Leu) means living in harmony together, the name of the collaborative apartment building in Holland that houses seventy-five Chinese elders. The building is located in Amsterdam, where almost 30 per cent of those over 55 are immigrants from non-Western countries.

Amsterdam immigrants include a large Asian population from the former Dutch colony of Suriname, from China, and from Indonesia, among other countries. In contrast to native Dutch elders, these older migrants are poorer, live in sub-standard housing and have less access to social services.

Often, their children and grandchildren are integrated into Dutch society, but they still hold on to the old ways – they do not speak Dutch fluently or eat Dutch food and are not well adapted to the larger society, making the Dutch senior assisted housing an inadequate option. Difficult to reach and inform about their living and health possibilities, and isolated from family networks of support, these elders rarely reach out for the help they need.

An immigrant to the Netherlands from Suriname Henny Liu is the driving force behind Foe Ooi Leeuw. Liu's demeanour – at 72 he is quiet and thoughtful as a scholar – belies his instigator energy. As the chairman of the Chinese benevolent society for the elderly, Tung Lok, he often accompanied elderly members to the doctor to help in translating their Chinese into Dutch.

He knew first-hand the small and large problems that faced his ageing members, their adult children moved out, relatives far off, and a growing need for day-to-day care. Collaborative housing for Asians had been developed in another city, and he thought, 'why not in Amsterdam?' 'There is a word in Dutch – *'mantelzorg'* – which means warm protection, like a coat – the care of the family', explains Liu. 'I wanted to create this for our elderly in the centre of Amsterdam'.

To have a building of their own to grow old in and support each other was a vision that Liu initiated and persistently moved forward. The first step was to get a site, difficult in the expensive and built-out core of the city. After 10 years of network building, an infill site became available, along with an approved building design, backed out of by a previous entity. Located in the Bijlmer (officially Bijlmermeer) within Amsterdam's southeast neighbourhood known as the Zuidooost, the site was originally part of a vast housing project comprised of tall hexagon high-rises. When Suriname gained

its independence, many Surinamese were placed there; other immigrant groups settled in the area representing dozens of countries. The area's reputation was poor; the housing, not designed for social networking and not well maintained, deteriorated over the years. A new master planned redevelopment area underway had as its goal a diverse mix of residents and building types, and collaborative housing would add to that diversity (figure 17). The site is located close to a metro station and shopping, but the design was for a larger building than the group desired; nevertheless this was their best opportunity to move the collaborative project forward.

The challenge for the non-profit developer, Delaforte, and the service provider, the Osira Group, was to create a sense of home for the residents in their adopted land. They sought a method to better understand the residents' requirements in order to tailor the housing interior and services to their cultural needs. It was also important to create a group out of diverse members; although all Asian, they did not share the same language, background or country of origin. A team of eight young professional artists in design, illustration, interior design and photography, members of



Figure 17. In Amsterdam's Bijlmermeer, a segment of the 1970s hexagonal high-rise development, right, was razed due to social problems and a variety of new housing types were master planned, left site plan, including collaborative housing (shaded rectangle). The green open space on the site plan is the footprint of where the previous high-rise stood. (Source: HVDN Architects)

the non-profit Young Designers & Industry, were introduced to the seniors while the building was still in construction. Working together with the artists brought many benefits: a way to bring diverse residents together, to emphasize through art the collaborative aspects of the building, and a way to bridge a cultural – and generational – gap between the young Dutch professionals and the seniors.

Engaging with their new neighbourhood was just one of a variety of methods and ideas the artists employed with the residents

(figure 18). Liu and an interpreter from the Osira Group helped in communicating between the designers and the Mandarin, Hakka, and Cantonese speaking elderly. 'The artists had a playful way of talking that engaged the group', observed Liu. Getting to know the diverse residents well over a period of time, the young designers could translate the groups' cultural memories and stories into contemporary designs for their new building (figure 19).

The design explorations began around the four themes of everyday rituals, mem-



Figure 18. Future residents in front of the building site, introducing themselves in the neighbourhood by releasing balloons with cards about the unique development, the largest collaborative housing for Asians in Holland. (Source: Erica Blikman)



Figure 19. Young artists worked with the future residents on interior designs for their new building. (Source: Erica Blikman)

ories, crafts and games (Bakker, 2009). Two designers, Irma van Weeren and Laura Braspenning, focused on the kitchen as a 'common binding factor' among the residents and 'the heart of the residential community', explained van Weeren. (Tan, 2010) A craft common to both the Chinese and Dutch is porcelain tableware; working closely with the future residents in a series of workshops to create their own dining sets, Irma and Laura saw a process of social networking begin as the designs formed. Artistically blending

Chinese and Dutch images of familiar objects such as people, planes and the building onto the porcelain dinnerware was not only symbolic of residents' background but also of artistic collaboration and common dinners (figure 20).

The mayor of Amsterdam was on hand at the project's official opening on 5 February 2009. A celebratory dinner was held earlier, when residents first moved in, and of course they used their best china (figure 21).



Figure 20. A close look at images developed by artists with the residents for placement on china used for common meals reveal an airplane, their building, and a star-shaped flower made of people sitting together. These were incorporated as decorations in the chinaware used for common dinners. (Source: Cor van Gastel)



Figure 21. The first common dinner at Foe Ooi Leeuw using the new dinnerware designed by young artists Irma van Weeren (standing next to Henny Liu) and Laura Braspenning (standing far left) with the future residents. (Source: Cor van Gastel)

*Collaborative Design Elements –  
Some More Successful than Others*

Two of the fifty-six apartments on the ground floor, each 80 m<sup>2</sup> with a bath and kitchen, were combined to create a shared common meeting space. The building's architect, Arie van der Neut of HVDN Architects, also sought to increase social networking through interior architectural elements. In China, narrow streets called '*hutong*' are the traditional gathering area of neighbours. Residents of the courtyard housing along the *hutongs* sit and talk to each other in the alley-like roads. At Foe Ooi Leeuw, extra wide corridors 3 metres long take the idea of the *hutong* indoors, with enough circulation space to become informal meeting areas. The double loaded corridors lack the sunlight, views and activity of *hutongs*; and do not appear to be often used as a place to sit (figure 22).

Another design element, a rectangular window located in the hallway at eye height and placed to stimulate resident interaction and monitor ageing residents, opens into the apartments (figure 23). The idea was that strolling down the hallway, both passer-by and apartment resident would see and wave to each other.<sup>13</sup> At well over 80 years old, Lieuw Chan in her living room benefits from passers-by contact and extra surveillance, but many residents felt too exposed and prefer the option provided by curtains. The architect suggests that the large number of residents and their diversity has made them more reluctant to embrace these social design elements but that they would increasingly do so over time.

A more popular design detail was the lowering of bathroom fixtures at the request of the elders. This kind of detail is rarely considered but makes a big difference to accommodate their shorter stature.



Figure 22. The extra wide corridors attempt to replicate *hutongs*, Chinese alleyways where much social life occurs. These indoor *hutongs*, and the windows looking into the apartments from it, have proved far less popular among the residents than was imagined.

Figure 23. Extra wide corridors and small windows looking out into them were designed to 'stimulate' socializing among residents. (Source: HVDN Architects)



The common space on the ground floor is used daily by residents, who meet to talk and play Mahjong, sing karaoke, or hear the latest news (language barriers can preclude understanding local papers and the TV). For special occasions there are common meals with elders cooking, often in their own apartments, and then bringing down the food to eat together. Residents also do Tai Chi, and often go out together for shopping and entertainment; a group of residents walk together for exercise. Services, such as cleaning apartments, is available from the Osira Group, with an office in the building<sup>14</sup> or from other service providers.

Jerry Straub, president of the foundation Foe Ooi Leeuw, describes some of the activities for the wider neighbourhood, which include residents preparing monthly dinners for the Salvation Army and their soon to be realized intention of supporting the local Food Bank by cooking meals for the poor.

One hundred years ago the first Chinese settled in the city. A special neighbourhood celebration run by Foe Ooi Leeuw resident volunteers and sponsored by the municipality of Amsterdam South East, Osira Groep and Rochdale, took place in 2011 to celebrate the event. Mahjong and Tai Chi lessons and a Chinese barbecue were provided.

'By developing Foe Ooi Leeuw, we built many good ties to other organizations and helped to make visible the needs of older

Chinese, who tend to isolate themselves, thinking they should solve their problems on their own', said Liu.

## Conclusion

*First: Does Collaborative Housing Have a Positive Effect on the Wider Neighbourhood?*

From resident replies, conversations with developers, local municipalities, and those involved in their management, there is evidence that collaborative housing has had a positive effect on the surrounding neighbourhood, which varies among the communities described (McCamant, 1999).

While collaborative communities cannot be expected to solve the wider neighbourhood's social and care problems; they can model good neighbouring:

- ◆ Successfully mixing residential incomes, as Swan's Market Cohousing illustrates;
- ◆ Stabilizing a vulnerable or marginalized group, as in the Foe Ooi Leeuw example;
- ◆ Stabilizing a small neighbourhood block from further deterioration, as in Lehe;
- ◆ Building design that extends a greater openness to the neighbourhood than seen with more conventional housing, as in Swan's



Market Cohousing's terrace opening out into a public plaza;

- ◆ The provision of services, particularly for seniors, that prolongs senior resident independence, as in Mano or Foe Ooi Leeuw
- ◆ Introducing a different residential population into a building or neighbourhood, as KanKan Mori brought an intergenerational population into senior housing, and Swan's Market brought in homeowners to an area that lacked home ownership.
- ◆ Involvement within communities in volunteerism and local politics, which would make an interesting further study; anecdotal evidence suggest it is high.
- ◆ In addition, a project's common space in some instances has been made available to outside groups, for example several outside groups meet at Goethestrasse's common space; and the local neighbourhood association has met at Swan's Market Cohousing.
- ◆ Also, the ability of the communities to collaborate with each other, as the Fureai Jutaku initially had done, has a potential to effect change within a larger community.

Just like any good neighbour, collaborative communities can be helpful, but limited in their assistance.<sup>15</sup> Even in the best of circumstances, the primary focus of collaborative housing residents is towards sustaining the community within their site.

*Second: Does the Development Process Create a Foundation for Neighbourhood Collaboration?*

Collaboration is first a process, not a product. Some evidence can be observed that points to the development process creating a foundation for the future community's interaction and concern with the surrounding neighbourhood.

Unlike typical single-family housing, in collaborative communities the process of

project development and that of residential day-to-day life are not separate but linked in complex ways. Typically, a social development process parallels the housing development process; potential residents, formed into a group, discuss the formation and running of their community, often participating in the design process. They gain a trust in the functioning of the group and learn facilitation and group management skills.

This development process already begins to build 'team' cohesion by forming alliances among future residents, and between residents and local organizations and the municipality. These intertwined roots help create a sense of collaboration that can, after project realization, stretch into the community.

Particularly with non-profit developers and managers, the larger organizational mission, often tied to neighbourhood development, is articulated. In addition, the local organizational alliances are numerous and diverse, as shown for each of the five projects, aiding project realization. This assistance to the group may be viewed as depositing social capital into the neighbourhood 'ledger,' along with investment dollars.

Potential residents, drawn to collaboration, may be more favourable towards giving to the community and involvement within the larger neighbourhood. The development process and management can further emphasize this role.

*Lastly: What are the Prerequisites for Encouraging Engagement with the Wider Neighbourhood?*

*The Role of the Instigator/Coach.* Self-organized groups like Goethestrasse required help in matters such as site acquisition; the group itself handled the social networking, recruiting members. Many groups, on the other hand, require more guidance and support in gaining residents, in learning facilitation skills, and in designing common areas. In the project examples, a coaching organization often took an active role. The Cohousing

Company (for Swan's Market Cohousing), the Collective Housing Company (KanKan Mori), the Tung Lok Society/Chinese Elderly Association (Foe Ooi Leeuw), and collective housing promotion assistance groups (for Mano Fureai Jutaku) helped in the navigation of both the social and building formation process.<sup>16</sup>

The coaches were also the instigators of the project, in three examples, and reached out to find potential residents, in four of the examples. Those groups who had many meetings and were involved with the design of their community, such as Swan's, Foe Ooi Leeuw and KanKan Mori, have residents using the common space on a daily basis. Mano residents did not participate in the development or architectural design of their building, and met together for a shorter time than other groups. Not involving the residents in the development process and fewer meetings on how to collaborate can result in less use of the common spaces. Likewise, one can surmise that, if the project instigators place a focus on the importance of the larger neighbourhood during the development process, as EBALDC did for Swan's Market group, or reach out to the neighbourhood as the Foe Ooi Leeuw future residents did, that this would influence the group's perceptions and stretch the boundaries of their project.

For self-forming groups, such as Swan's Market, an extended development process winnows residents to those who are dedicated to collaboration, and to the particular site; potential residents hone their group skills as they work to move the process forward. For groups formed by the non-profit instigator coaches, a particular population or location may be the goal. The selection of residents may implicitly favour those who can articulate or represent stated neighbourhood goals, or are neighbourhood residents. These potential residents, attuned to the neighbourhood, may require more in-depth knowledge and skills in collaboration.

For vulnerable populations, some con-

tinued assistance is provided once they have moved in as occurs at Foe Ooi Leeuw with a part-time social workers/interpreters.<sup>17</sup> Collaborate living for vulnerable groups cannot be expected through the creation of common space and the intention for collaborative living alone; ongoing support is often required. That support, in turn, could organize volunteers or events that involved the larger neighbourhood, as at Foe Ooi Leeuw.

#### *Urban Setting/Type and the Role of Design.*

Two urban settings were examined: urban revitalization (re-using existing structures within the inner city) and urban infill (new construction on land that has become available). Examples for a third setting on previously undeveloped land are more readily found in the literature<sup>18</sup> but such sites are becoming harder to locate in urban areas. A fourth emerging urban setting is the reorganization of existing housing and apartments into incremental collaborative communities (Fromm and de Jong, 2009).<sup>19</sup>

Urban revitalization projects, such as Goethestrasse or Swan's, are relatively small developments (ten to twenty units) in close proximity to their non-project neighbours, share some architectural characteristics of surrounding buildings, yet are recognized as a distinct entity. The ground floor presence of in-between space, such as Swan's Market Cohousing's ground floor entrance and common space opening out to a larger, public courtyard or the green space at Goethestrasse, provides a means to see and be seen, increasing neighbourhood networking.

Within the five projects, the urban infill developments were not as likely to share architectural characteristics with the wider neighbourhood nor to have well-developed in-between spaces towards the larger block. KanKan Mori has no direct street presence and is not physically distinguished from the wider neighbourhood. Although both Swan's and KanKan Mori are part of a larger mixed-use development, the former has a ground floor garden, the latter does not. 'A ground

floor presence is important to create a strong connection to the surrounding neighbourhood', believes Tomoaki Kageyama, from Japan's CHC organization. He compares KanKan Mori and Sugamoflat, two Japanese projects where collaborative housing is placed in several storeys of a larger facility (with no ground floor presence), with those projects where the entire building is collaborative housing and where neighbourhood interaction is more pronounced.

The edges and in-between spaces where the collaborative housing connects to the wider neighbourhood can allow for lingering, for views, and for social interactions, or can be non-porous. The repositioning of in-between neighbourhood spaces, such as the traditional narrow alleyways between housing in Japan and China, to the building's interior, has had limited success in Foe Ooi Leeuw. Such self-contained interior common space, without exterior views, provides little in the way of connection with the larger neighbourhood.

The type of urban setting is not as strong a factor in neighbourhood collaboration as the design balancing residents' ability to have their community common space while also creating opportunities for interaction in front or along the edges of the property, connecting to the wider community.

When the actual residents are able to meet during the design process, form a bond, and participate significantly in the design, the resulting design can be less traditional and more creative for this kind of wider neighbourhood interaction. During the design of Swan's Market Cohousing, the architect reports that 'the co-housing residents were very interested in having as much interaction as feasible with the affordable housing residents (located in the larger Swan's Market development but not part of the co-housing), which is one of the reasons that the entry to the affordable housing parking garage is immediately adjacent to the co-housing entry' and the group also considered having all the residential mail boxes in one central location, although this did not occur.

Well-designed in-between spaces have been shown to increase social connections (Gehl, 1987). This should not be taken as a suggestion to share the common facilities with those outside the collaborative group. At KanKan Mori, sharing the spa with non-co-housing senior residents did not work out as expected. Several Scandinavian collaborative projects, in which more essential common facilities, such as kitchen space, are shared with non-group neighbours, have not worked well over time or required strong and on-going efforts at communication.

*The Role of Residential Types.* Three residential types were included – intergenerational (Swan's, KanKan Mori), senior-friendly (Goethestrasse) and senior only residents (Foe Ooi Leeuw). Communities that start out intergenerational, such as Swan's, can move towards senior-friendly as residents age in place and a decreasing percentage of children live full-time in the community. Communities with seniors in their sixties and seventies will age over time, and will be likely to decrease in common activity. Residents understand the need to balance their developments with appropriate types and ages of new residents to maintain a 'good mix'. Collaboration may not be sustainable where residents are vulnerable elderly and all of similar ages, say in their seventies and eighties; including residents in their fifties and sixties would be prudent when possible. In some countries, such as the United States funding and housing policies do not support this kind of residential selection; in others such as Denmark and Holland, there is somewhat more leeway.

For intergenerational projects, neighbourhood amenities such as a good school attract and keep members, as in Goethestrasse; its lack made it more difficult to hold on to families at KanKan Mori. In the former, the household with children is more active in the local school while several older residents mentioned an interest in gardening. In KanKan Mori, some of the families, having

to work long hours, were less involved in the co-housing community than the senior members, who had more time. The question of whether intergenerational residents are more active and involved in the wider neighbourhood or whether their involvement is just different from seniors-only residents requires further investigation.

From these five examples, the most critical aspect appears to be the residents' strong interest in collaboration, second is their ability to collaborate, which with age, health and economic circumstances can diminish. Another important factor, briefly noted at Foe Ooi Leeuw, but not part of this research, is the size of the collaborative community.

#### *Limitations and Potential of Collaborative Housing*

Creating a cohesive group before moving in improves the design, can speed the approval process, and ultimately makes for a better run and more supportive community, saving time and money throughout the lifetime of the development. Yet the necessarily extended social development process may appear restrictive to many developers and potential residents. In addition, many State and Federal housing laws do not support these types of projects. Strong collaborative communities have pre-selected residents involved in the design process, but fair housing laws can prevent residential preference for certain types of affordable housing before the building is completed. Strong communities often have residents who share similar values around collaboration, but for subsidized housing, residents are typically chosen according to income levels, not intent. In addition, the non-profit developer's ability to patch together many different types of assistance and the collaborative group's ability to leverage their resources makes these models unique and not easy to duplicate.

In Scandinavian countries such as Sweden, with a long history of collaborative developments (Vestbro, 2010), and Denmark,

with co-housing developments that span 40 years, far less than one percent of the population has embraced this housing type. While not taking the place of the individual single family home, collaborative living is an important and growing housing alternative.

With a Do-It-Yourself emphasis, these communities can work in conjunction with existing neighbourhood resources. Burns, the director of Bremerhaven's municipal housing association said, 'Stäwog and the residents share a desired goal to raise awareness so that people start to feel more responsible for their neighbourhood. Goethestrasse has definitely had a beneficial effect on the neighbourhood ... acting as a kind of beacon that signals commitment and responsibility for the surrounding community.'

Collaborative housing has the potential to establish community networks within transitional neighbourhoods.<sup>20</sup> The projects are of the right size and intention for neighbourhood networking – more highly networked than the typical individual home owner, more invested than those living outside the neighbourhood, and more flexible than large building owners or district bureaucracy. In banding together, residents have made themselves and their needs visible to agencies in ways that an individual household could not. In the creation of Foe Ooi Leeuw, for example, the networking created among many agencies made visible the needs of older Chinese residents, who individually were isolated.

Rather than viewing collaborative housing as appealing to a limited minority of constituents, a collaborative development can be viewed as a hive of community, with benefits that can extend beyond its walls. As the international projects reviewed here demonstrate, collaborative housing can play a limited but important role in neighbourhood stability and repair.

#### NOTES

1. Social capital is an intangible asset gained

through informal trusted relationships. While not measured like 'capital' it does provide value through reciprocity, facilitating individual and community action.

2. Within the co-housing group, 25 per cent were low and moderate income and used the city's first time homebuyer's programme (five out of the twenty units). Eighteen affordable units for low and very low (below 60 per cent and 35 per cent of median) incomes are located in an adjacent building, both share the courtyard.

3. City Planning Office Bremerhaven; Lehe District, from Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development within the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning (Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung im Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung), Bonn.

4. The urban restructuring funding programme 'Stadtumbau West' was launched in 2004–2008. Martin Karsten at Federal Redevelopment of the West (FORUM), Oldenburg, has been analyzing a patchwork strategy combining local and government support to intervene in deteriorating neighbourhoods, carried out in a selected number of German cities.

5. The Städtische Wohnungsgesellschaft Bremerhaven mbH (Stäwog) was non-profit until a decade ago. Since that time, it has become a private development company, acting with a 'non-profit spirit' associated with the city council of Bremerhaven. The focus is on affordable housing rather than on profit.

6. Germany is a 'nation of tenants', the rate of property owners is comparatively low.

7. Bremerhaven-Lehe 'Reorganisation of the Schools' <http://www.werkstatt-stadt.de/en/projects/194/>.

8. CHC's first project, Syoin Commons (2002–2010), in Setagaya-ku, Tokyo, re-purposed an existing home into a common house, and a new condominium infill building was constructed as shared housing for seven residents (also constructed was a single family home for the site's owner).

9. As of 2012, there are four families, one couple, and the rest singles. Two single parent families had lived there in the past.

10. The barrier-free Silver Housing has ageing in place design such as emergency communication systems, easy to open hardware and handrails, common rooms. The care support is provided by

'Living Support Advisors (LSA)' responsible for 24-hour emergency care, as well as health advice and some housecleaning assistance, though they are not generally located in the facility. Residents need to meet a set of requirements to apply for this type of housing.

11. Collective housing projects located in the City of Kobe include two projects (eighty-seven units) under city management and eight projects (254 units) under Hyogo prefecture management. One project is under Amagasaki City management.

12. The Association of Boards of the ten collaborative housing developments, Fureai Jutaku Renrakukai, also looked into the problems and successes in the communities, summarized in a newsletter of Architects, Regional Planners and Associates, Kyoto (ARPAK) not dated. The Board found that some residents really do not understand the concept of collective housing. When the collaborative housing is combined with other housing (for example, housed in several floors of an apartment building) the residents in the other housing units assume they will receive some advantages in social services. In truth, they have somewhat better common space but the actual running of that space has to be done by the residents themselves, and this may not be clear. The Board felt that the public organizations are not much involved after the housing is built, although they do a good job in planning the facility. The burden of management falls on the board. The lack of funding for activities is also a problem. In addition to these issues, as the residents get older the collaborative activities decrease. They felt that having support systems and barrier free spaces will become very important in the future.

13. Low-rise co-housing developments have unit kitchen windows overseeing the walkway that passes by the housing to increase the likelihood of residents seeing and greeting one another; this design takes the idea into mid-rise developments.

14. Twice a week, Osira's resident coordinator, who speaks Dutch, Cantonese and Hakka, helps with residents' applications for care requirements. Twice a month, there is monitoring of blood pressure, and other health related check-ups, including advice on how to live healthier.

15. Norbert Friedrich from the City Planning Office in Bremerhaven was supportive of Goethestrasse as 'nearly all members are very engaged in the social and cultural projects in ... Lehe' though engagement in the neighbourhood, while positive, appeared limited in scope. Collaborative housing, while not a panacea,

worked in concert with other tactics, which in that district included monetary aid, restructuring several schools, and cultural programming (Bremerhaven-Lehe, 2011).

16. Although not active in the formation of Goethestrasse, the Forum Gemeinschaftliches Wohnen e. V. (FGW – Forum for Collaborative Housing) has a role in Germany collaborative communities.

17. An interesting example is the Libenau Foundation which provides ample common space and a part-time social worker to help residents organize common activities, one half-time social worker for approximately forty residents.

18. Literature lists can be obtained from the following organizations: Cohousing Research Network (US); UK Cohousing Network (United Kingdom); Kollektivhus Nu (Sweden); Landelijke Vereniging Centraal Wonen (LVCW, Dutch); Samenhuize (Belgium); Cohousing Australia; and the Canadian Cohousing Network.

19. An example of this ‘emerging’ type is the senior collaborative house Majbacken in Sweden, begun when a core group of four friends moved into an eight-storey senior apartment building in 2004, with the intention of creating a network of support. They advertised among the existing building residents for those who were interested in collaboration, over time growing their group as more and more resident households joined in to cook common dinners and take part in social activities. As of 2012, thirty of the thirty-one units are now participating; dinners are cooked twice a week in the common kitchen.

20. Research points to communities that are well-networked as having a higher rate of recovery in disasters than those that are not (Aldrich, 2010). The reason is that residents can rely on each other as a resource in the networked community.

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