

# Cohousing in the Netherlands

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## I

### Motivations and expectations

#### *About motivation:*

*Young man, ca 20, single: Rotterdam, Eighties,: “When I'm at home I don't want to have to fetch my coat and shoes to meet a nice person and have a pleasant conversation. And I don't want to marry for that reason”*

*Woman 40+, single, a good life in Amsterdam, many friends, but something was lacking. She looked for a different situation and found the Cohousing project in Hilversum where she found a social micro context where one lives physically near and socio-culturally intimately connected .*

#### *Other motivations, then and now*

- \* ideological/ political oriented versus social motivation and more pragmatic*
- \* now: strong ecological orientation, footprint-responsibility , green technology*
- \* now: general higher living standard, general higher space and luxury demands*
- \* then: more concerned (politically motivated) about neighbourhood relations,  
now: example effect*
- \* then 'living with the world / representing social, economic and cultural reality'  
around them,  
now: certain level of 'cultural similarity' preferable*

#### **Five questions to start with:**

- \* What do you want to do communally*
- \* Why*
- \* Where*
- \* When*
- \* with Whom?*

## II

# Exchanging motivations, expectations and images

*The exchange of images should result in a shared cohousing image that is derived from individual images and translated into design requirements.*

### **Imaging-presenting-testing process** (John Zeisel)

Image exchange, first between group members, later between representatives of group and architect + other members of planning committee)

#### **Tasks social enabler/facilitator:**

- \* organize brainstorming and information
- \* structure discussion and decision making process  
(check verbal and expert dominance of members of the group, but)
- \* guarantee contribution of expertise in the group
- \* make room for minority ideas/images
- \* assist choosing and experimenting with decision making model(s)  
(should contribute to future cohousing practice)
- \* guarantee documentation of outcomes
- \* keep an eye on developments in the group: numbers, relations, involvement/commitment

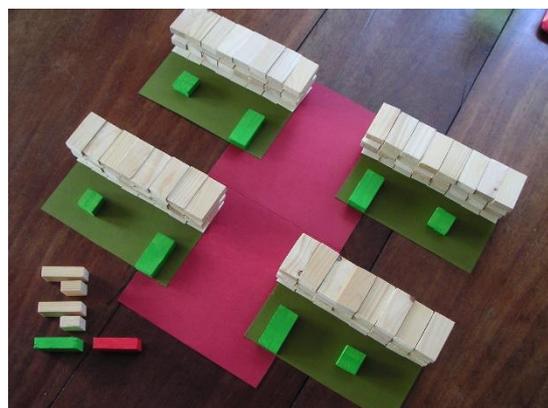
(Social enablers position is independent, the behavior unobtrusive and two social enablers is preferable to one)

#### **Role/attitude architect**

Architects are good at imaging 'in their heads' and are trained (and creative) in presenting images (models, drawings etc). Presentation makes testing possible.



*Preparing a shared cohousing vision*

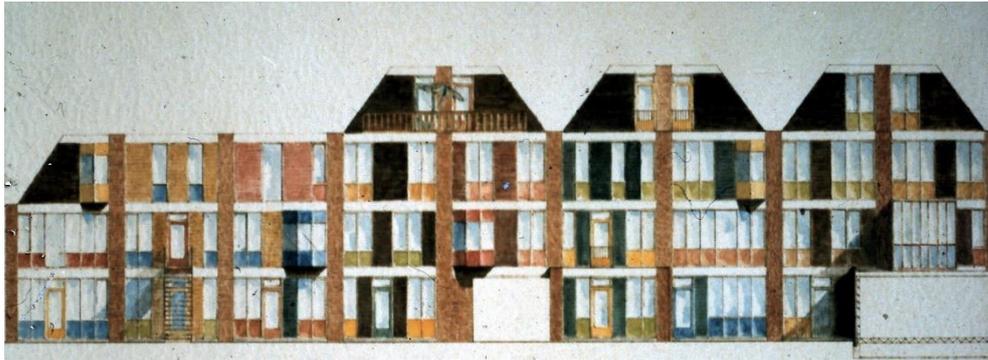


*3 layer tree structure 'fields volumes functions'*

### **Architects attitudes then and now:**

*Seventies: 'being the pencil of residents': book titles like 'Freedom to build' by John Turner and Robert Fichter, Houses are for people and 'Tenants take over' by Colin Ward.*

*Now: listening to user clients and at the same time take professional responsibility. (Philip Krabbendam, CW Delft)*



*Architects expectation of resident influence on the façade*



*Residents influence in practice (Corien Snijders)*

### **Real, relevant influence of the group on the design(process) demands:**

- \* presentation of (all) private images (made conscious)
- \* fruitful exchange of personal images
- \* discussing and testing results (repeating the process until...)
- \* integrating private images into shared vision (architectural expertise)

### **Assets**

- \* architect (user / client oriented)
- \* site (or building)
- \* corporation (social housing) /developer
- \* juridical statute (formal administration)

### III

## Main design decisions

*Translating shared image into design decisions (input architectural expertise)*

#### A) **Size:** larger/smaller

Communes, living groups, co-housing/'community housing' :

Focus: Centraal wonen/co housing: consisting of different households, including groups.

'Modal' co-housing projects: between 40 - 50 households/units, with extremes of over 100 households, depending on 1) social co housing vision, 2) site, 3) corporation/developer, 4) building (renovation).

#### B) **Social-spatial layering and access structure**

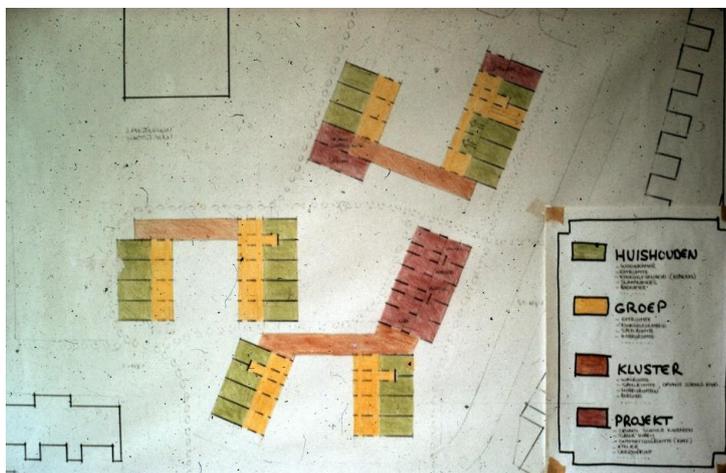
##### **Concentrated communal space and facilities**

Inspiration: Denmark, Hillerød: "Children should be better off with 100 parents", open up the small, inner directed nuclear family. General communal space, preferably centrally situated and large enough to accommodate all group members/residents at the same time for cooking, eating, meetings, festivities etc.

Example: Danisch 'Faellushus'

##### **Layered communal spaces and facilities**

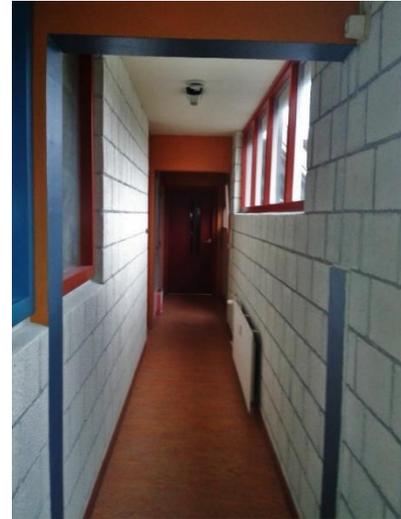
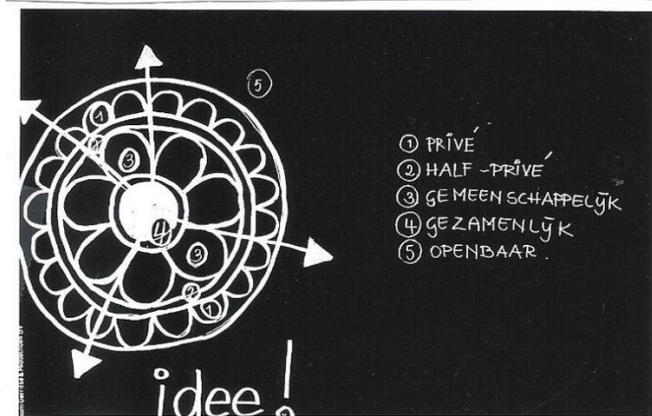
'Centraal wonen Delft' and 'De Banier' in Rotterdam: communal space and facilities on different levels, so communal space is dispersed and differentiated. General communal space is combined with several smaller communal spaces like living rooms, kitchens, laundry, etc. They are dispersed over the building and called '**cluster spaces**'



*Social-spatial layering in CW Delft: 4 level tree structure*

### Access structure (internal connections)

In Delft these cluster spaces (orange) are physically and socially connected with specific private space and households (green). Cluster space is also subdivided in two, three or four 'group kitchens' (in yellow zone).



*Social layering in CW Rotterdam: 3 level tree structure*



*Cluster space in Rotterdam*

In Rotterdam the clusterspaces are not - socially and physically- connected with specific private space/households. (consequence: long, narrow, dark corridors)

These models of layering are a result of experiences with group size and specific communal activities. (Hamburg Steilshoop 'Mieter planen mit', Rolf Spille)

### **C) Communal spaces/facilities**

#### **Which facilities, how many, size (square meters) and where?**

The variety, location and intensity of communal facilities and activities reflects the ideas of co-living of the group.

Connecting/relations between private and communal space has to be discussed too.

### **D) Group dynamics during the design process**

#### **Prepare administrative model (behavioral setting)**

- \* committees and working groups
- \* house rules (smoking, animals, children playing, bar function, cleaning)
- \* responsibilities, sanctions ('paradox of the commune')
- \* participation expectation
- \* recruitment and selection practices

#### **N.B.**

#### **Make/Keep social and design process connected and mutually reinforcing!**

Threats:

- \* influence of dominant (housing) references: family life and homes for elderly people
- \* postponing administrative questions until "we really live together"
- \* underestimating administrative complexity and demands
- \* influence of new members on the design: stick to main design decisions
- \* neglecting recruitment and selection of new members

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