Creating a senior cohousing community in the UK: a case study

This study traces the processes of group formation in one emerging co-housing project in the UK. It focuses on the multi-scalar dynamics of community building to identify opportunities and obstacles for future cohousing, especially senior, development.

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Interdisciplinary Thematic Questions

1. How and why are cohousing groups assembled?
2. What are the costs and subsidy implications of cohousing?
3. How and why was this South London location selected?

FACTS

History: Formed in 2011 by 2 housing insiders seeking to transform vacant 18 bedroom mansion in South London.
Process: Monthly meetings, with lunch; Periodic design workshops; Negotiations with HA and LA’s.

1. Despite policy and government support, local community does not yet know enough about the concept of co-housing. Perceptions seem to be that they are just another large housing development, in it for the profit without consideration to neighbours.
2. The elaboration of financial and legal arrangements has been more time-consuming and complicated than anticipated. Due to lack of clarity regarding financial and legal requirements, final group and individual commitments, as well as design, still hang in the air.
3. Raises questions regarding ties to localism policy: is the onus on planners or local residents? How will this tension develop?

Featherstone: profile and emerging findings

Age group: 50+
Members: 17
Funded: Housing Association & members
Conditions: 50 yrs old & broadly committed to cohousing ethos
Values: not formally established, interest in ‘community’ and ‘green’ living.

Methods
- participant observation
- interviews
- focus groups

Actors

Political
- Local Authority committee members
- Planners
- Central government

Academic
- Sociologists
- Urbanists
- Economists
- Geographers

Design
- PTEa architects
- Green and self-build consultants
- Members

Cohousing
- Finance & Property
- Local Authorities
- Land-owners, developers & banks
- Residents
- Existing & would-be members
- Neighbours

Networks

CO-HOUSING

Green Networks
Housing Networks
US Cohousing Networks
European Cohousing

prevdents
Scandinavian & US, UK HAPPI report, M. Brenton

future future
UK, Dutch, Danish & German communities