

a place to care

a design exploration of community

This graduation project investigates the relationship between care and community and reflects on the possible impact of these learnings on design practice. Care is a complex dimension of life, which entails the act of providing everything that is necessary for the maintenance and repair of the world (Tronto 1993). From this perspective, we can reframe many of the challenges in our society as challenges of care, and recognize the importance of addressing care outside of traditional (institutional and consumer-based) perspectives.

One of these divergent perspectives is community-based care. There are indications that communities might offer interesting alternatives of care, however, research on community care often focuses on the outcomes for individuals, rather than on the internal dynamics of the community where care is experienced. For this reason, exploring what communities can tell us about the practice of care becomes promising. In this project, I investigate the interaction between care and community, by pursuing a small-scale care intervention in two Dutch central living organisations.

The outcomes of this research reflect that communities offer an unique perspective from which care can be addressed. Care in communities is direct, embraces diversity, evolves constantly and thrives on both structured and spontaneous practices. Interestingly, the relationship between care and community is even deeper, care supports the construction of community. Given its promising qualities to address care, I suggest three ways in which design can support community care: designers can support care within communities, support communities with care, and support care that exercises community values.

