

# The Collaborative Home

Perception of the collaborative home amongst residents  
// Collaborative housing, home, privacy, design //

**Research plan**  
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**TU Delft**

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*Figure 1 Community Street in Jystrup Savværk (Vandkunsten, 1984)*

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## Introduction

The Dutch population is growing. Most growth is situated in and around the big cities with the Hague as the front runner for the most densely populated city in the Netherlands. It has 6.827 citizens per square meter and is still becoming denser every year (*Bevolking | Regionaal | Volksgezondheid En Zorg*, n.d.) This means we have to share the limited amount of space we have with a growing amount of people. Luckily, the interest in shared housing is growing. Around 25% of renters in Amsterdam are interested in some sort of collective housing arrangement (Cooplink et al., 2022). Around 12% of the people living in The Hague would be interested in collective housing (Centrum Groepswoon, 2021). Among these interested people are not only inhabitants but also researchers, designers and politicians.

Within shared housing, residents are not only sharing space, but also time and resources. On the one hand there is the functional aspect of sharing, as in using the same space and dividing household chores. On the other hand the social aspects of sharing, regular interactions can result to friendships. Shared housing facilitates not only sharing tasks, but also sharing burdens of daily life and facilitates social support amongst each other. However, this does not come easy. For sharing to be successful, there is a need for communication and tolerance amongst residents. These important 'soft' features can only take place in a proper design of the social and physical context. The focus of this graduation project will be on the physical design of shared housing.

### Definition

In this paper, I use the term collaborative housing, defined as housing with shared facilities (Lang et al., 2020). It originates from the cohousing movement which arose throughout Europe in the 1960's (McCamant et al., 1994). Cohousing is described as the collective organization and management of housing (Lang et al., 2020). Designers are still building further upon the initial cohousing idea however the concept is currently associated with many varieties of housing that do not necessarily include shared spaces. As sharing is the starting point for my research the term cohousing is not relevant for this research. Collaborative housing (CH), introduced by Dorit Fromm in 1991, is a more suitable term. The definition includes many international concepts but only describes forms of housing including shared facilities. The concept focusses on long-term participative relationships (Babos et al., 2020). The characteristics of CH, Fromm (1991) describes are: common facilities, private dwellings, resident-structured routines, resident managed, design for social contact, resident participation in the development process and pragmatic social objectives (Fromm, 1991; Lang et al., 2020; McCamant et al., 1994; Tummers, 2017; Vestbro, 2010).

### Relevance

Collaborative housing has financial, ecological and social advantages. First of all, CH can bring forth affordable housing. Today's housing market is seen as an investment source, ruled by commercial project development with little government support for the social housing corporations. This results in too little housing stock which are too expensive and not fitted to the current needs. Arie Lengkeek (2022) states the government and market should allow space for co-operation's which are autonomous collective citizen organization whom fulfill common needs without profit purposes. Co-operation's will generate housing types that can fit more specifically to the needs of the individual and the collective than the current housing stock (Lengkeek & Kuenzli, 2022) Therefore, independent collective ownership is an important border condition for CH.

Secondly, CH has sustainable benefits. Collective organization provides possibilities for sustainable investments which are out of reach for individual households. Sharing spaces and resources in daily life results in a more sustainable and affordable lifestyle. By sharing resources CH promotes reuse and adds value to single items and space because of its

increased use. Collaborative housing can therefore inhibit people from excessive consumption and put an emphasis on relationships instead of things. Some even state it could eventually evoke more tolerance of others and protect our democratic society (Czischke et al., 2023; Daly, 2015; Jarvis, 2019; Sanguinetti, 2014; Tummers, 2017).

Lastly, CH has social benefits. There is a present-day duality with the growing individualism and privacy is clarified in the article of (Jarvis, 2011). On the one hand there is an existing neoliberal norm with an emphasis on self-reliance, privacy and rising expectations of convenience in housing. This coexists with a growing feeling of isolation and loneliness in the work centered lifestyle. CH could be an opportunity to re-introduce the neglected interhousehold collaboration and facilitates a social support network for the little everyday troubles but also the greater challenges in life (Carrere et al., 2020; Giorgi, 2020; Jarvis, 2011; Lietaert, 2010).

### Problem statement

Currently, less than 0,2% of the current Dutch housing stock is collaborative housing (*Co-Lab Research - Mapping*, n.d.). CH makes up only a small share of the housing in the Netherlands which should expand because of the reasons mentioned above. Research has already been done on attitudes toward CH by (Put & Pasteels, 2022). In the article motivational barriers for cohousing are researched by means of qualitative interviews with Flemish inhabitants. In summary, the responses state that participants are scared for the loss of privacy, loss of control over routines, space and decisions and lastly state the fear of conflict. These barriers are all connected to the fear of loss of sense of home. Most participants believe that the feeling of home can only be manifested in the single family household (Put & Pasteels, 2022). However the concept of privacy was only inseparably linked to the concept of home from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onward (Cieraad & Short, 1999) The concept of home is defined as: “a key site of in the social organization of space. It is where space becomes place, [ ]. The home is an active moment in both time and space in the creation of individual identity, social relations, and collective meaning.” (Cieraad & Short, 1999) The citation suggests that besides the individual meaning of the home there is also a social and collective meaning of home. However, this collective element of the meaning of home is currently neglected. This is supported by the research of Sara Brysch (2019) where she redefines the concept of *existenzminimum* as a minimal quality standard of the home. According to Brysch, collective facilities are one of the named aspect of the minimal quality of home. The home could become smaller because of the supporting shared facilities. However, over the last decades this was used as a reason to produce even smaller, cheaper homes which were sold as individual elements, leaving the collective facilities behind (Brysch, 2019). Collectivity does not necessarily undermine a sense of home, but could

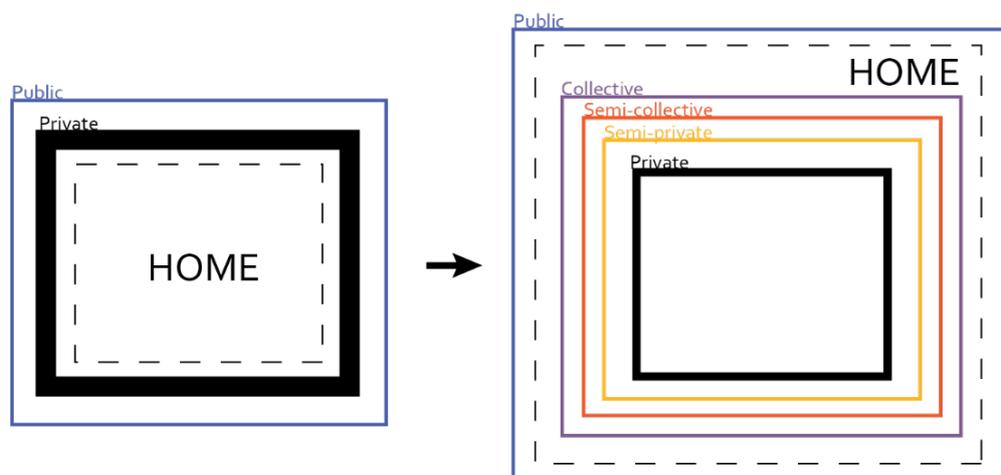


Figure 2 Current emphasis on privacy in housing design

augment it. The current literature is lacking a collective dimension to the concept of home. The leading research question therefore is: *How is collectivity in the meaning of home perceived and expressed by residents in collaborative housing?* The hypothesis is that there is a collective dimension to the meaning of home. This is visualized in figure 2. A collective dimension to the meaning of home could improve the design of collaborative housing. The research adds to the design knowledge of collaborative housing. This is needed to increase the amount of collaborative housing projects needed in the Netherlands.

### **Research question**

*How is collectivity in the meaning of home perceived and expressed by residents in collaborative housing?*

With the following sub questions:

*What are collective elements in the definition of feeling at home?*

*How does the design of collaborative housing influence the sense of home?*

*How do residents perceive the collective dimension of home?*

### **Theoretical framework**

According to (Lang et al., 2020) study's on feeling at home in CH appeared in Europe, since 2008. At home studies are categorized under the umbrella term collaboration. According to their scoping literature review, at home studies lean more toward the individual experience on the spectrum from individual and collective experience within collaborative housing. The research relates to the physical translation of belonging and appropriation of home in shared arrangements.

Before outlining the method we need to look deeper into the collective aspects of home and collaborative housing design. In the first place, the concept of home will be further explained with the research of (Brysch, 2019) on Existenzminimum and the anthropological research *At home* (Cieraad & Short, 1999). Additionally, works of (Easthope, 2004; Easthope et al., 2015; Gutierrez, 2021; Markiewicz, 2020; Rechavi, 2009) will give a contemporary overview on the definition of home. From the literature, collective aspects of home are derived.

The second part of the theoretical framework will elaborate on design principles for collaborative housing to be able to add to the design knowledge. The work of Dorit Fromm (1991) is the basis for defining the core elements. Tummers (2017) states that the work of (Fromm, 1991) is still the most elaborate overview of the main characteristics of collaborative housing. She emphasizes the importance of the intermediate zones the workings of a successful community (Tummers, 2017). The work of (Beck, 2020; Brinkø et al., 2015; Fromm & De Jong, 2021; Heath et al., 2017; Jarvis, 2011; Kaminer, 2022; Marcus, 2000; Neykova, 2022; Williams, 2005) will give further elaboration on the core design elements of collaborative housing. The body of the theoretical framework will be further developed.

## Method

To answer the research question three collaborative housing projects are selected and analysed. The qualitative study of the case studies is elaborated through a plan analysis and interviews with residents. By doing this, this study will test the hypothesis whether there is a collective experience of home within collaborative housing.

### **Casestudy selection**

To select the proper case studies, a number of criteria have been established. During the selection process an interesting feature of collaborative housing stood out. The hall way, a central connective space. In Denmark they have named this central hall way 'The community street'. The community street is the space where the private and the collective meet. In this space it is It is a spatial translation of the question where the boundary between private and collective lies. It can be a helpful element to study how residents translate the boundary of their home. The case studies selected all contain this community street.

The projects in Denmark are a possibility because, many projects take ideas from the Danish designs (Beck, 2020). Therefore, studying the Danish examples makes the results generally applicable. The other criteria are: Collective ownership, situated in the Netherlands or Denmark, Communal spaces, Privat spaces , Multi-generational, Sharing for longer period of time, and ideally in an urban setting. The actual selection and justification of the selection will be further elaborated in the future.

### **Methodology**

The case studies will be analysed first through the eyes of the architect and secondly through the eyes of the resident. It shows the difference between the planned design and the actual use. First, the case studies are analysed through the eyes of the architect by doing a plan analysis. The guiding question is: How did the architect plan for the collective home? General information is also documented as: Where is the project situated?, Who lives there?, What is the program?, What do they share?, How long have they been sharing for? By documenting the floor plans, the designed configuration can be organized in private spaces, semi private-spaces, semi-collective spaces and collective spaces. The plan analysis is based on documents that are accessible online.

Secondly, the case studies will be studied through the eyes of the resident by visiting the project and interviewing the residents. The guiding question is: How is the collective home perceived in the project? The on-sight study will begin with a tour of the project. During the tour pictures, sketches and notes are taking of the current state of the project. It will give information on: visibility between spaces, use of space and sharing practices. If the configuration is changed by the residents over time it will be documented in the sketches. Before the interview, a questionnaire is conducted about general background information which could influence their perspective of home. The theoretical framework will be the backbone for in-depth interviews with the residents. The interview will give an overview of the perception of home.

### Expected results

The results from this methodology are visualised in figure 3. On the left hand side is the spatial analysis through the eyes of the architect. The plan analysis of the case study will result in the spatial definition of private, collective and public space. On the right hand side the interview towards the perception of home is visualized. The residents of the collaborative housing project will provide a definition on their perception of home. The twofold of results can afterwards be projected onto each other, to be able to see where their definition of home meets the collective layers of collaborative housing. The collective dimension of home can be translated to certain design guidelines. The whole research process is visualized in figure 4.

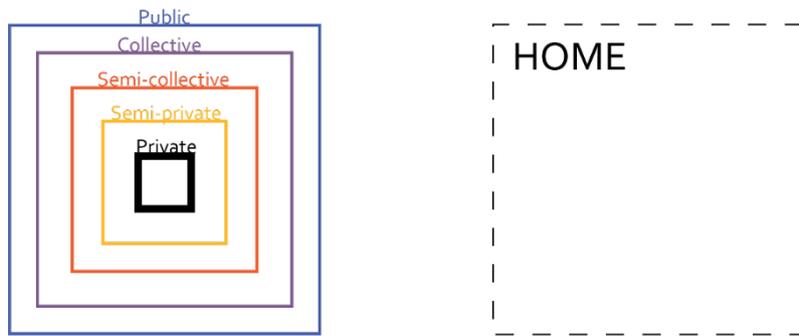


Figure 3 Results from plan analysis (left) & Interviews (right)

### Relevance of the research

This research will add to the collaborative housing design knowledge, by creating a more collective definition of home. The current definition of home which has an emphasis on privacy is not sufficient for collaborative housing design. The collective definition is needed because designers are striving to create homes for the collective which is very different then creating a home for the nuclear family household or other private dwellings. Besides this, the research on collaborative housing is still lacking the design perspective. Co-creation an self-organization are part of the collaborative design concept. To support this process proper design guidelines which are backed up by research are needed. Lastly, the research will add to the knowledge on the perception of collaborative housing by residents and how these projects evolve over time.

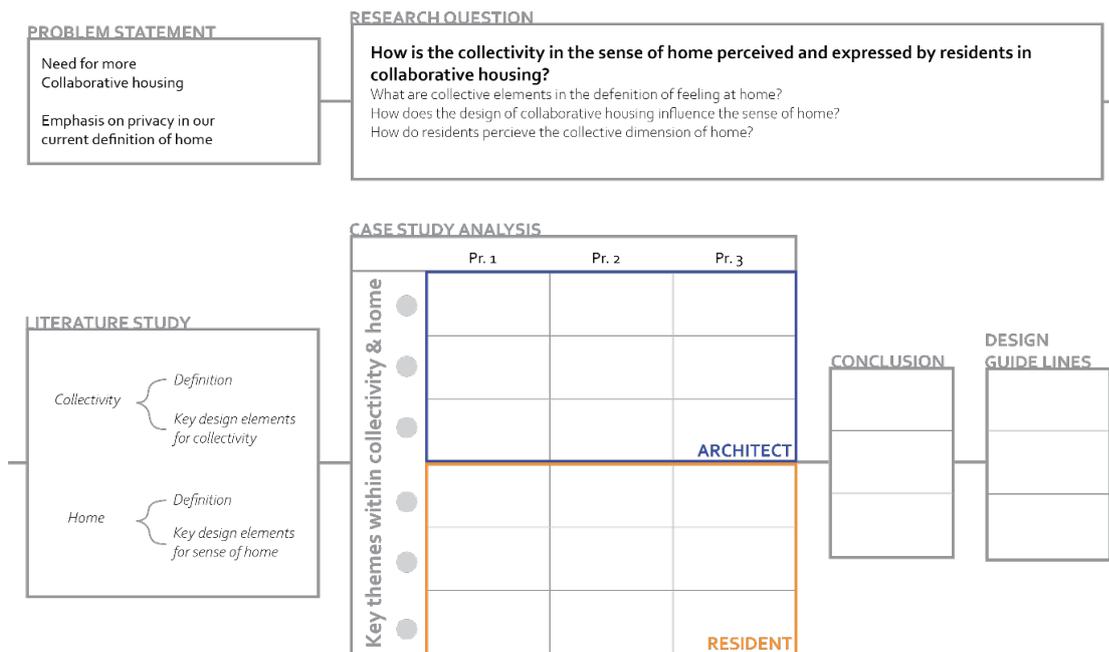


Figure 4 Research diagram

## Planning

The planning for conducting the research is visualized in figure 5. Additionally to the planning I will try to schedule two meetings. First with sara Brysch, to discuss the key themes in collaborative housing design. Secondly with Liesbeth Janson from Centrumgroepswonen, to discuss the design idea and get information about the current state of collaborative housing in The Hague.

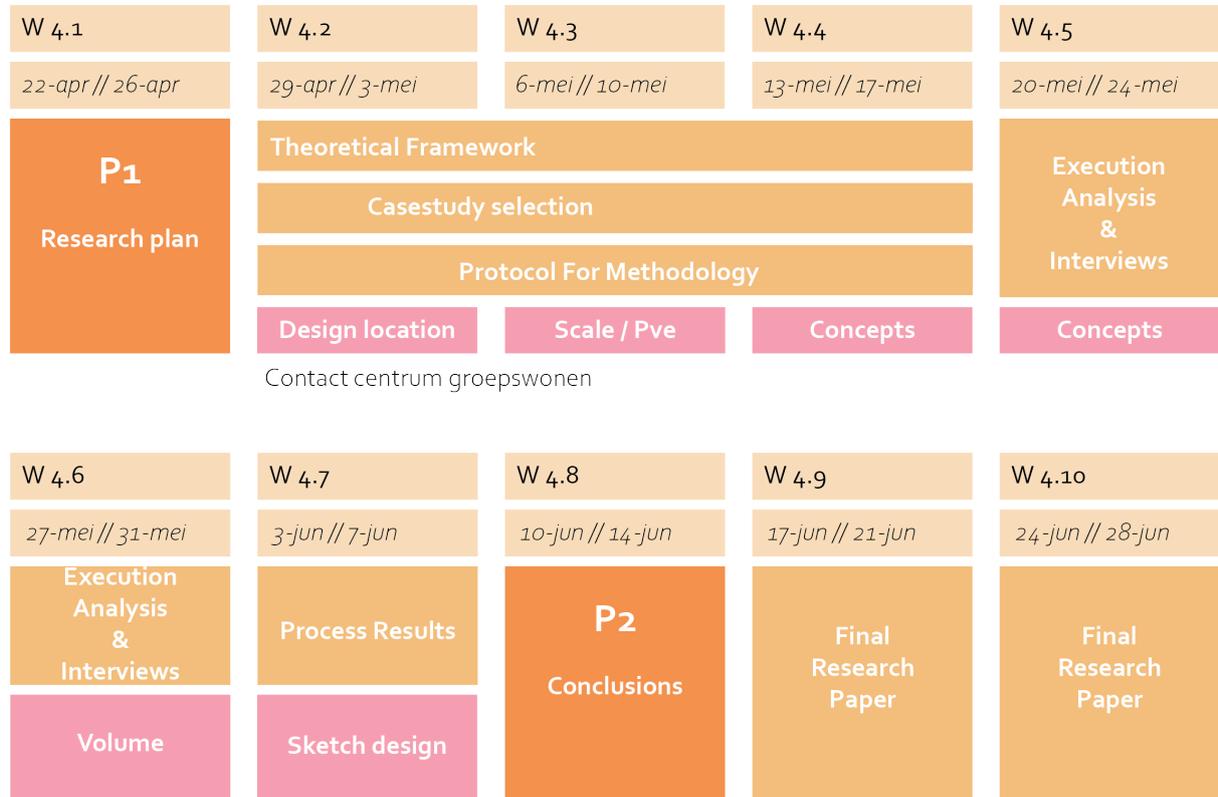


Figure 5 Planning

## Design idea

In the second half of the graduation project I will design a collaborative housing project. From the research I hope to extract certain design guidelines for collaborative housing which can be used as theoretical support throughout the design process.

The chosen design location is the Binckhorst in The Hague. It is an industrial zone south of the city center. The municipality has created an urban plan for over 5.000 dwellings. Some of the projects are already being build, but some are still theoretical. Most of the designs are large high rise towers with a combination of private dwellings and workspaces. In the advertisements the project developers are talking of a new lively neighborhood where there is space for the individual and community. The design has large public green spaces and some communal spaces within buildings. There was a plan for shared housing in the project of Pegasus, however it is not sure if this is realized. Further, there is no space for collectively organized housing.

The graduation project will be a proposal for a possible collaborative housing design within large urban development. In the next coming weeks the size, target group and exact location will be decided upon.



Figure 6 Location analysis on the Binckhorst, The Hague

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