

Communal, individual and cheap?

Developing Houthaven through building groups



Thesis Plan
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Design as Politics: We the People

Bert Oostdijk
1020153
Bert.Oostdijk@gmail.com

First mentor: Ir. R.E. Tan
Second mentor: Ir. L.P.J. van den Burg

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Introduction

This Thesis Plan contains my proposal for the final project of my Masters study in urbanism, within the 'We the People' studio. I chose this studio because it offers a more in-depth discussion of the problems Urbanism aims to solve. I am also interested in the studio's exploration of the theme of activist urbanism, dealing with self-organization instead of a commission form an institutional client.

H1: Project Description

1.1. Motivation

Who gets to live within the Amsterdam ring road? The Dutch social housing system made it possible for people with modest incomes to live in the city center, which contributed to making Amsterdam a pleasant and mixed city. However, this system is currently in crisis. The economic crisis has halted housing construction, and corruption scandals have eroded the credibility of housing corporations. However, the waiting lists for social housing show the demand for affordable housing is still growing.

I want to propose a different system for creating affordable housing, based upon an idea which is very popular at the moment: that the self-organization of people should take over where large institutions fail. Building groups offer various ways to organize financing and cut costs, so housing can be realized in a cheaper way.

Houthaven, a harbor site which has seen a small pilot project with building groups, but for which development is mostly still in limbo, will be a good testing ground for this.

1.2. Problem field definition

What?

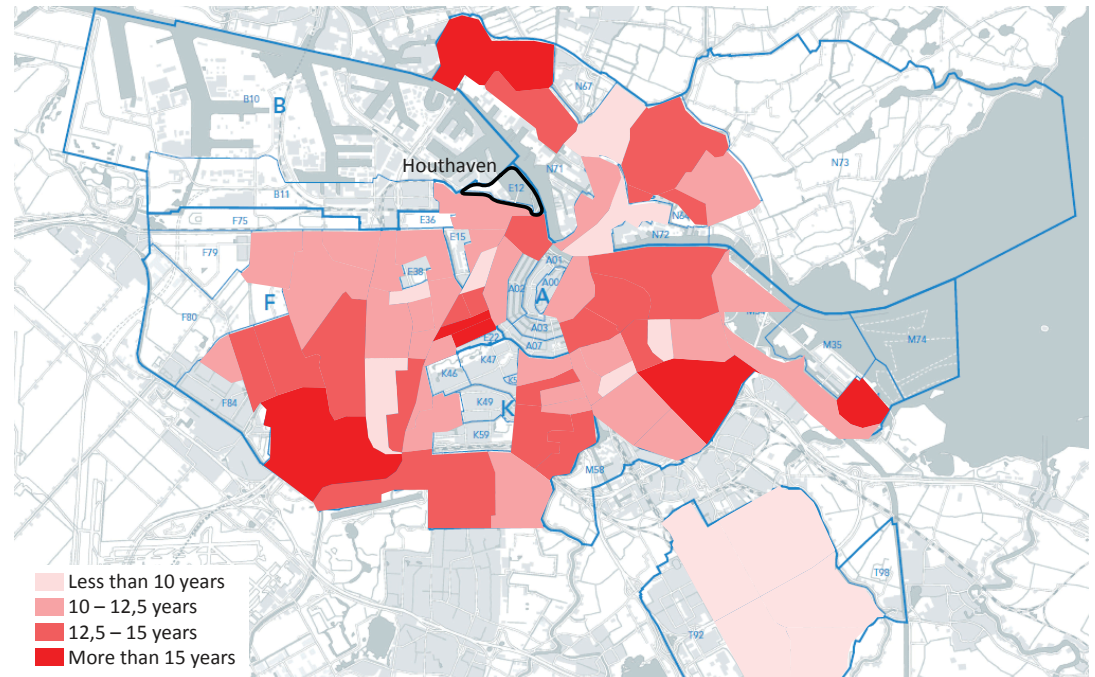
The Location of my graduation project is Houthaven, a former port site in Amsterdam. It is located alongside the IJ water in the West borough, close to the city center of Amsterdam. For years it has been a site with only some temporary functions in temporary buildings, awaiting further development. Redevelopment plans are moving forward at a very slow pace.

Houthaven is located next to the Spaarndammerbuurt, a neighborhood with many houses built in the 1920's School of Amsterdam architecture style. This expressionist brick style became popular in the years after the passage of the housing law in 1901, and symbolizes the progressive ideals of housing corporations in those days. The portmanteau "Spaarndammerhout" was used when making the early plan for redevelopment, to describe the goal of merging the new and the existing city.

However, a clash between Spaarndammerbuurt and Houthaven seems unavoidable. This clash is not only because of a difference in urban typology, but also about the idealism underlying this design. Spaarndammerbuurt was developed by institutions convinced they knew what is best for people, and it is clear that Houthaven will be developed in a more market-oriented way. For this reason it would be



Location of Houthaven within Amsterdam. (source: Open StreetMap)



Waiting lists for social housing by neighborhood. (own image, data: Woningnet, background: O&S Amsterdam.)



People enjoying Houthaven. (own pictures)



interesting to see whether the old ideals of creating making living in Amsterdam affordable for everybody could be realized in Houthaven in a way which fits in with the current era, which enables and values self-organization.

Where?

Houthaven is a former harbor area. Except for one wood trading firm, all industrial activities have now left the site. However, many temporary functions have moved to the area: a lot of student housing, schools, a floating office building, an urban beach pavilion and a party center in a circus tent. Development has been in limbo for so long many of these temporary buildings look quite shabby by now.

Though the area is used by many people (students who live there, the creative people who have an office there, kids who go to school there, partygoers...), few of them have a stake in the area. Most use is purely functional, except for some people from the neighborhood walking their dog, and some people who come by car to spend their lunch break at the waterfront. There is not much of a connection to the rest of the city. This character, typical for the leftover space it currently is, will invariably change when development gets up to speed.

Next to Houthaven is the late 19th, early 20th century Spaarndammerbuurt neighborhood. This used to be a working class neighbourhood with many migrants, close to the city center. At the moment the neighbourhood is gentrifying. Social housing is sold off at a rapid pace, illegal subletting brings in wealthier residents like expats, and hip bars are replacing brow cafés. Also adjacent to Houthaven is the Minervahaven port, which is currently transforming into an office area. Because of environmental restrictions due to still operational port activities, housing is not allowed here. Many of the newly constructed offices are still empty.



Temporary functions in Houthaven (own pictures)

Who?

Originally, development was proposed in a top-down way, with three major parties involved, each representing one of the three parties always present in Amsterdam developments: the municipality represented by projectbureau Houthavens, the social housing sector represented by housing corporation Stadgenoot, and the private sector represented by project developer Synchroon. An idealistic policy document was written explaining how the new quarter would have a strong connection to neighboring Spaarndammerbuurt, so it would benefit from the development. Then, a tabula rasa urban plan was made by the municipality, with input from Sjoerd Soeters' firm, showing a series of isolated islands instead.

After legal plans were approved, social connectivity ceased being an issue. The focus shifted to the question of how to realize the urban plan. Because the priority was given to other developments in Amsterdam, like Overhoeks, temporary functions were built instead: student housing, temporary school buildings, and floating office space. In 2009, when the permanent development of Houthavens should have begun, the economic crisis had already started. Though it was tried to develop the first plot, 'Blok o', this attempt was halted because too few units were pre-sold.

To get out of the deadlock, the director of the housing corporation proposed a more bottom-up way of development. This was based upon an idealistic notion of giving power to individual users, rather than large institutions. The plot was divided into smaller ones, which were sold to groups of people, on which they could build following certain rules, including environmental targets. Because the urban plan called for highrise (22 till 29 meters in height) people would have to enter into collectives to be able to develop a plot. There were opportunities for both living and working. Within this structure of individual plots, small pockets of social housing could be built. This way, a lively, mixed and entrepreneurial part of the city would be created. This vision appealed to people and the sale of plots was a success, with different collectives having to enter into a lottery.

The formation of these collectives was done by project developers and by architectural firms seeking new commissions. The resulting designs are generic. They show no outward expression of individuality, or of a collective vision other than the choice between modernism and post-modernism. No collective functions or work spaces are mentioned. The only freedom offered seems to be in the interior. There was also no more space available for social housing, causing the initiator, Stadgenoot, to withdraw from the project. Bottom-up seemed to work as a marketing tool, rather than offering the diversity of a bottom-up city.

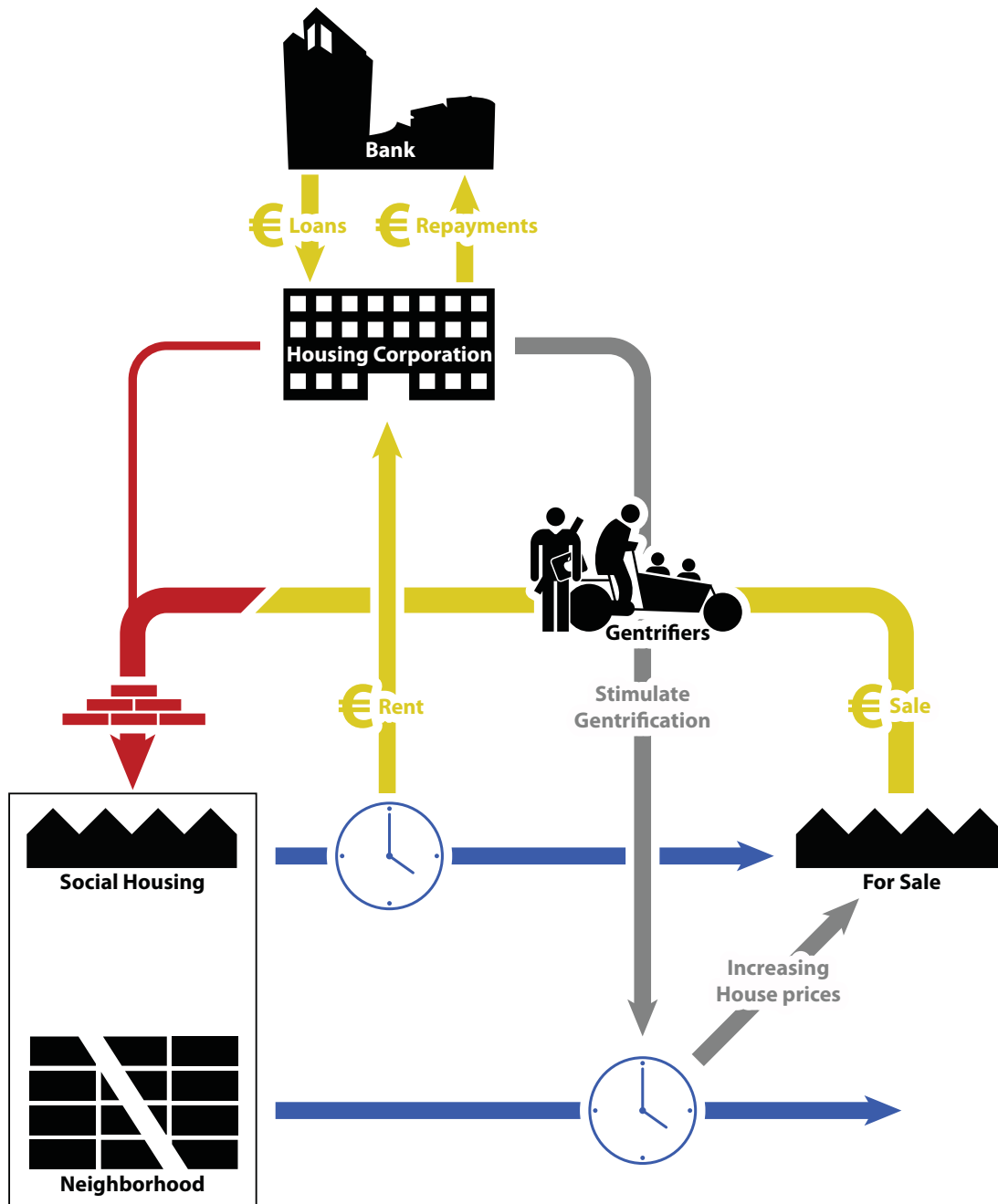
However, this is not the only way in which people influence development. The amount of money the people of Spaarndammerbuurt spend locally influences the attractiveness of the neighborhood and of the proposed Houthaven development. Spaarndammerbuurt is rapidly gentrifying. The way in which people vote determines the composition of the municipal council, which influences the policies of the borough and the project bureau Houthaven. Spaarndammerbuurt overwhelmingly votes Labor. People also try to influence the development of



Marketing campaign for Blok o, commissioned by project bureau Houthaven. (photo: G2K)



Frank Bijdendijk, former executive of housing corporation Stadgenoot, initiator of the lot-by-lot development of Houthaven. (photo: Maria Heijendael)



Pre-crisis model for financing social housing. (own diagram)

Houthaven through participation processes and lobbying. However, since the legal plan has already been approved little participation is happening at the moment.

All of these ways to influence the development of Houthaven are influenced by the demographics of the surrounding area. Because of the profitability of subletting, low-income people leave the area, to be replaced by students and expats. Because of the sale of social housing, newcomers are more often part of the middle-class. Some middle-class people move away to a more rural setting. However, this is counterbalanced by low-income people whose income rises, making them part of the middle-class. The project bureau already advertizes with Houthaven's proximity to the new 'Pijp'. Though Spaarndammerbuurt retains many characteristics of a working class neighborhood, this tale comes closer to the truth each year.

Political system

The current housing market is plagued by many probes, many of them caused by policy at the national level. Housing in general is a controversial political issue in the Netherlands. Both renters and home-owners are invested in maintaining the government subsidies to the housing sector, with the labor party advocating for social housing and rent control, and the liberal party backing the mortgage tax deduction for home-owners. As a result of this, all plans for reforming the housing sector have failed politically.

The current crisis on the housing market might change this however. The housing market is currently seen as inflexible and requiring too much subsidies to both renters and home-owners. Houses are seen as overvalued, which limits the construction of new housing. Current plans involve liberalization of the rent market and reduction of the mortgage tax deduction.

The social housing sector is especially the subject of political scrutiny. Corruption scandals committed by housing corporation executives have recently been exposed by the crisis. This has caused political pressure to make sure housing corporations perform only their core mission, providing social housing, without spending money on other projects. Many housing corporations are not pleased with this. They don't see their task as limited to providing social housing, but to taking care of all aspects of the social and physical maintenance of neighborhoods with social housing.

Before the economic crisis, this area development strategy was part of the economic model used by housing corporations to finance social housing. After 1995, financial ties between housing corporations and the government were loosened in exchange for abolishing debt. After that, housing corporations had to arrange

financing for new social housing themselves. With house prices increasing, this could be done by selling existing social housing units. By encouraging gentrification, the value of social housing would increase, so for the sale of one apartment more than one could be constructed.

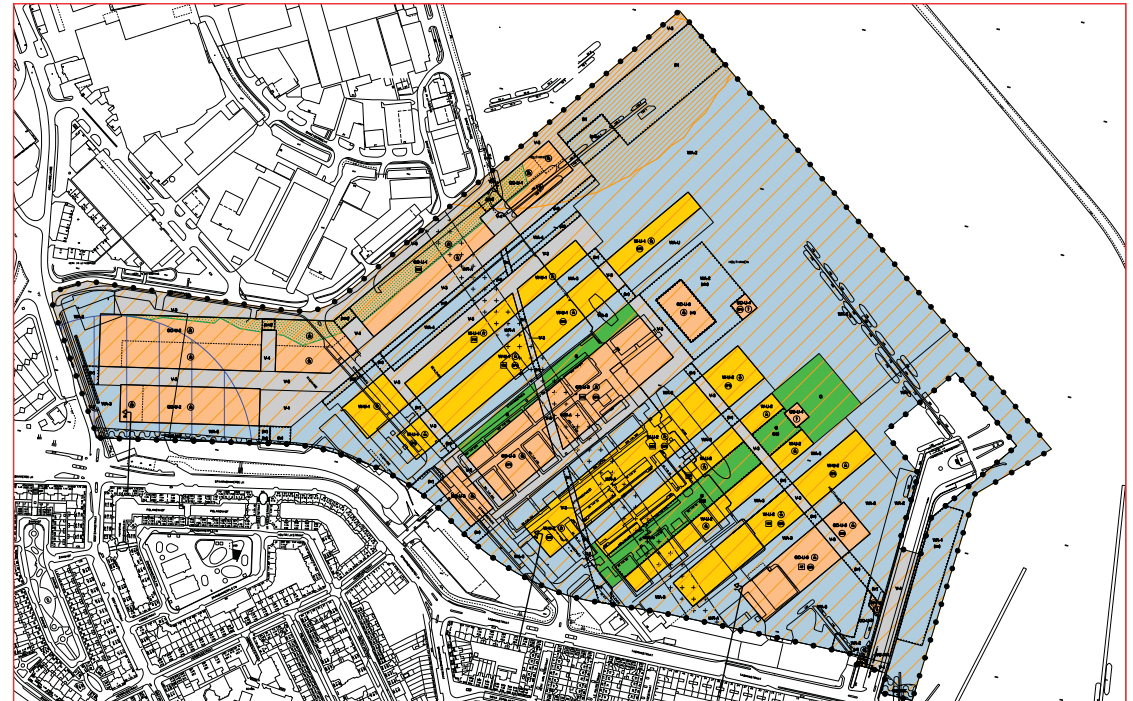
This economic model is no longer viable after the crisis. Because of decreasing house prices multiple apartments have to be sold for each one which can be constructed. Housing corporation programs to encourage gentrification used to be applauded by municipalities, but are now politically discouraged on a governmental level. There is not yet an alternative model for financing social housing, and the construction of it is now coming to a halt. The extra tax on housing corporations proposed by the government could add to this problem. A new way of financing affordable housing is therefore required.

Red tape

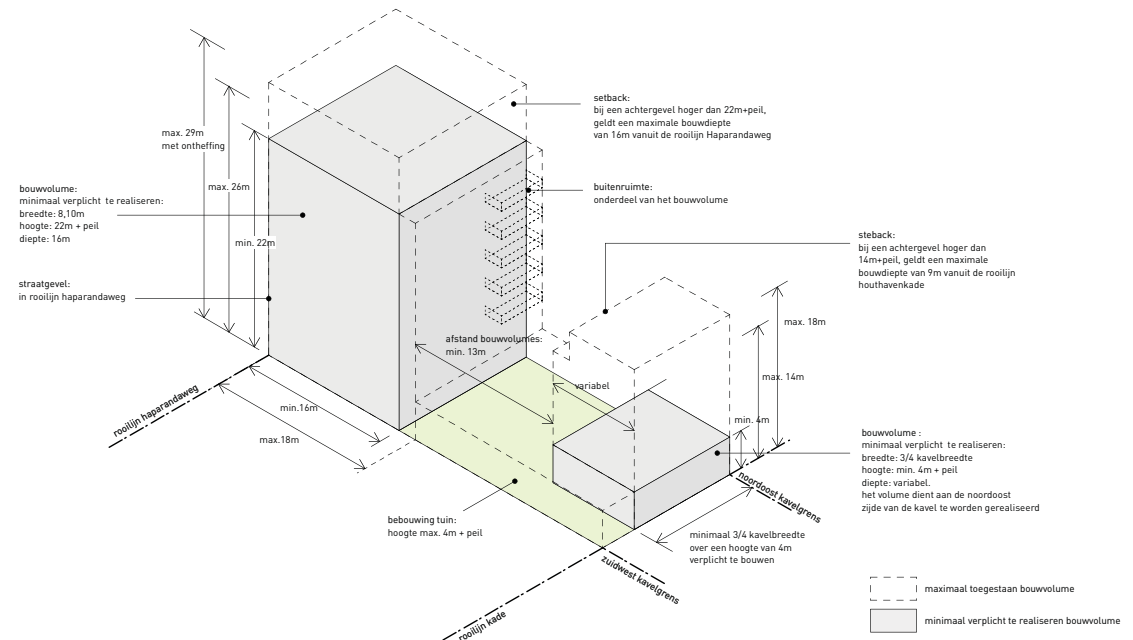
Most of the paperwork necessary for the development of Houthaven has been completed a long time ago. Based upon the urban plan made in cooperation with Sjoerd Soeters, the land use plan has already been changed. After the start of the economic crisis, the municipality did an audit of all their plans, to see which of them could still be viable. Houthaven was seen as potentially viable. After a round of optimization, which included lowering the percentage of social housing from 20% to 30% and turning some of the islands into peninsulas, the decision was made to continue with the development of Houthaven, and approved by the municipal council.

Though little red tape remains, there are some regulations influencing development. To comply with environmental regulations, the plan contains a ground level tunnel and a high and continuous deaf façade facing the port. However, it only has to be made credible these will be constructed at some point. The only thing impeding realization of the land use plan is the economic situation.

For most of the area, no concrete plans have been made for its realization. An exception is Blok o. At the moment building groups are busy drawing up plans, which have to be approved by the Houthaven project bureau. Some building groups seem to be on course for this, others have only just started looking for members. When the project bureaus judges the plans to be financially secure and the plans to be complying with urban and environmental regulations, there are few obstacles for development. The only other thing under development is that of a municipally financed school building, for which preliminary ground work is now being done.

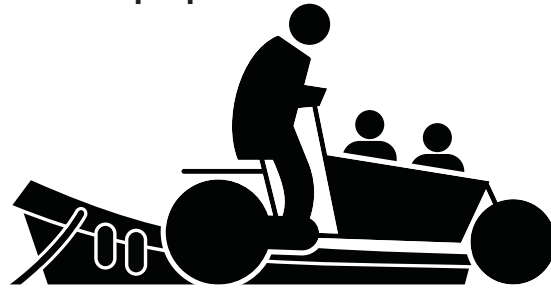


Land use plan for Houthaven. (source: Amsterdam municipality)



Lot regulations for the central lots of Blok o. (source: project bureau Houthaven)

The people who will live there?



Influence: Not at first involved but becoming more important now
 Goals: Quiet and safe public spaces, good facilities
 Values: Self-reliance, community

Want attractive public spaces and better facilities
 Open to neighbourhood or self-contained?

Importance of good urban design
 Land prices, mix of functions.

HOUTHAVEN

The people living around the area?



Influence: Not currently involved
 Goals: Move up to a better house, new public spaces, not being displaced by rising rents and sale of housing
 Values: Equality, fairness, choice

Large investors financing the redevelopment?



Influence: This was the original intent, but the crisis diminished their involvement
 Goals: Attracting affluent residents and making money
 Values: Competence, professional connections

Should the area accommodate wealthier people?
 Houthaven should improve its surroundings

The people

For my graduation project I chose to take only the current state of the development of Houthaven as the environment, while recognizing that this is highly influenced by policies and developments on the scale of the Netherlands. At this moment power relations are mostly at work and being reshaped by the development of Blok o. However, the future of Houthaven is still uncertain and power relations are not fixed. As for “the people” to whom my project is aimed is chose to focus on house seekers. This means disregarding other people who could be seen as stakeholders, such as the people living in nearby Spaarndammerbuurt or those who make temporary use of Houthaven.

The people

With Blok o, a first attempt has been made at developing Houthaven through building groups. However, this has resulted only in a very limited empowerment of future residents. Because of the way Bureau Houthaven organized the application process and because of the way the Dutch building industry is structured, the building groups were initiated and directed mainly by building professionals, in particular developers and architects. No residents have been able to initiate their own building groups. Compared to regular development, residents are empowered have more choice, because they can choose between different building groups rather than one design.

Who are ‘the people’? (own diagram)

However, the differences between the building groups are limited. On one hand this is because the municipality has prescribed many rules: technical rules like the requirement of constructing a deaf façade, urban rules like the discontinuous blocks alongside the water, and idealistically inspired rules, like the obligation of building in a climate neutral way. On the other hand, the parties backing the building groups have a commercial starting point rather than an ideological one, so they want to make sure their designs are attractive to a wide variety of people and are not too extreme. All building groups only offer owner-occupied units. These are not accessible to people with an income too low to qualify for a mortgage.

Businesses

Businesses have very different roles. At the moment developers and especially architects are empowered by the process. They have the knowledge and creativity to convince people to join a building group, and also the understanding of the bureaucratic processes to make it a reality. Having initiated a building group they can make important decisions, like the global design and the financial structure, and limit the input of residents to less consequential issues, like the materialization of the façade and the interiors of the apartments. The building group structure allows them to steer development while taking a lower financial risk. In addition to building professionals, businesses also have a role in the development process as consumers of space. Finally, the willingness of banks to provide mortgages is a concern in the background, because development requires some degree of lending.

Institutions

Few non-profit institutions are currently involved in the process. Though a housing corporation initiated the development of Blok o by building groups, they had no clear reason to do so apart from prestige. Their involvement did not result in any social housing units and they are currently no longer involved. Though housing corporations own development rights for Houthaven, they choose not to use these at the moment, because of uncertainty about both the housing market and national housing policy.

Public authorities

The municipality of Amsterdam is the only public authority directly involved in the development of Houthaven. To this end they created the project bureau Houthaven, as a cooperation between the central city and the borough of West. Their aim is to get the development of Houthaven started as soon as possible, even though the execution of current urban design will be expensive for them, because it will involve making land, making water and building a tunnel. They expect development to result in investments into the city, and in ground lease income for the cash-strapped municipality.

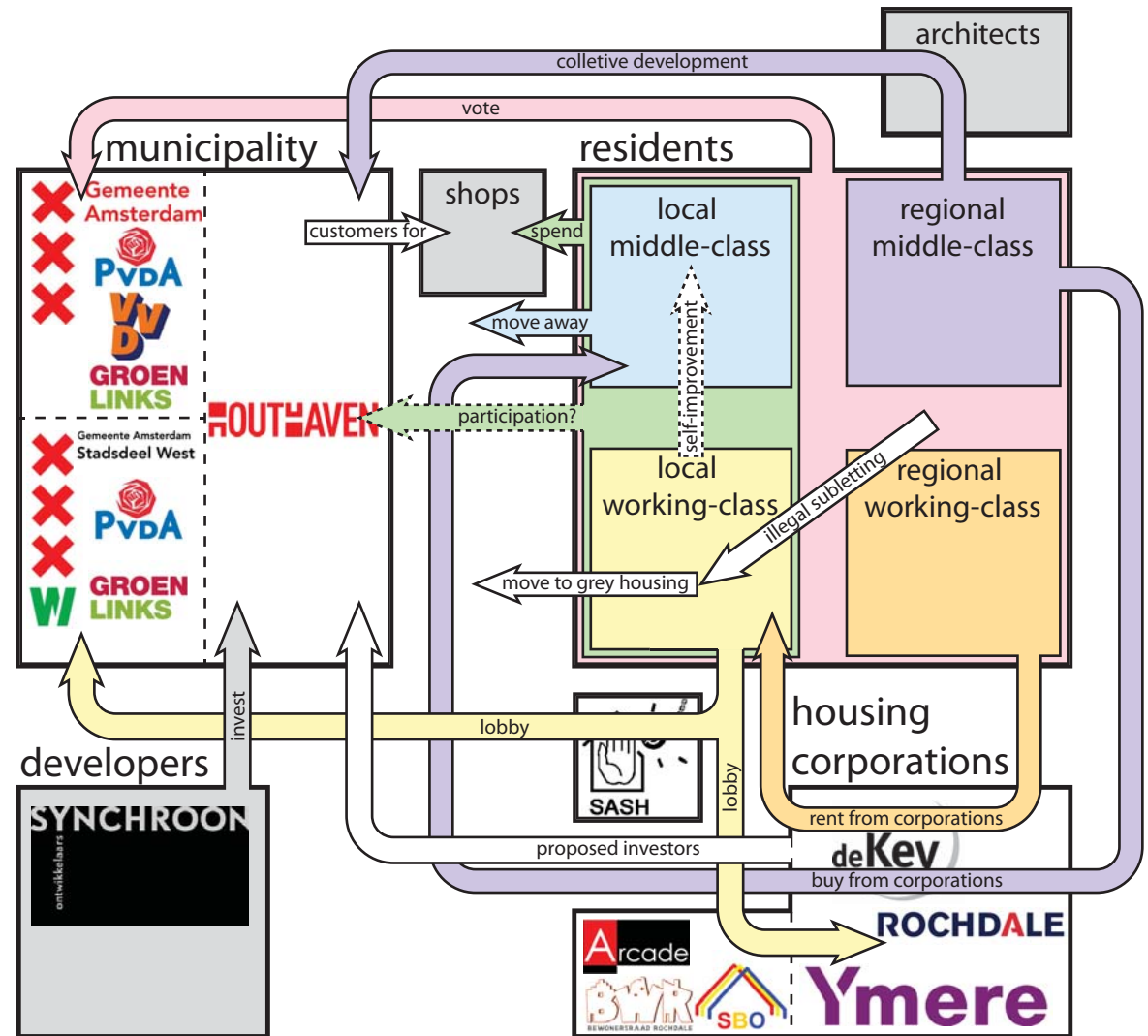


Diagram of actors currently involved in the development of Houthaven. (own diagram)



What are the actors in the current development process of Houthaven thinking? (own illustration)

1.3. Problem statement

The construction of social housing is coming to a halt. In combination with the sale of social housing and the liberalization of rent control, parts of Amsterdam, especially around the center, could become unaffordable for people with modest incomes. Without a new way of financing affordable social housing, new developments like Houthaven would contribute to this process. Politically and economically there is no possibility to finance social housing with public funds only. Therefore, it is necessary to find a new system to provide affordable housing, in a way which is fitting for today.

1.4. Aim and expected outcome

My goal is to find a new system to provide affordable housing. It should be a system based upon the self-organization of residents, supported by institutions. As a model for this I will use the building group. I will apply this system to the further redevelopment of Houthaven. In the first place, this means devising a system for individuals to work together in building groups, and for institutions to support this. Secondly, it means figuring out the urban questions which are posed by this way of development, and solving those with a global urban plan.

1.5. Research questions

The main research question of my graduation project is:

How can affordable housing be provided by development through building groups?

In order to answer this main question, I want to answer a couple of sub-questions:

- What are the similarities between the values underlying building groups and those of the open city?
- What are successful examples of area development through building groups and how do they work, both organizationally and architecturally?
- Which organizational measures are fitting when realizing affordable housing through building groups in Amsterdam?
- In what way does development through building groups influence the way people use public space?
- How can Houthaven be redesigned in a way which is optimal for development through building groups offering affordable housing?



Demolition of temporary student housing in Houthaven. (own picture)

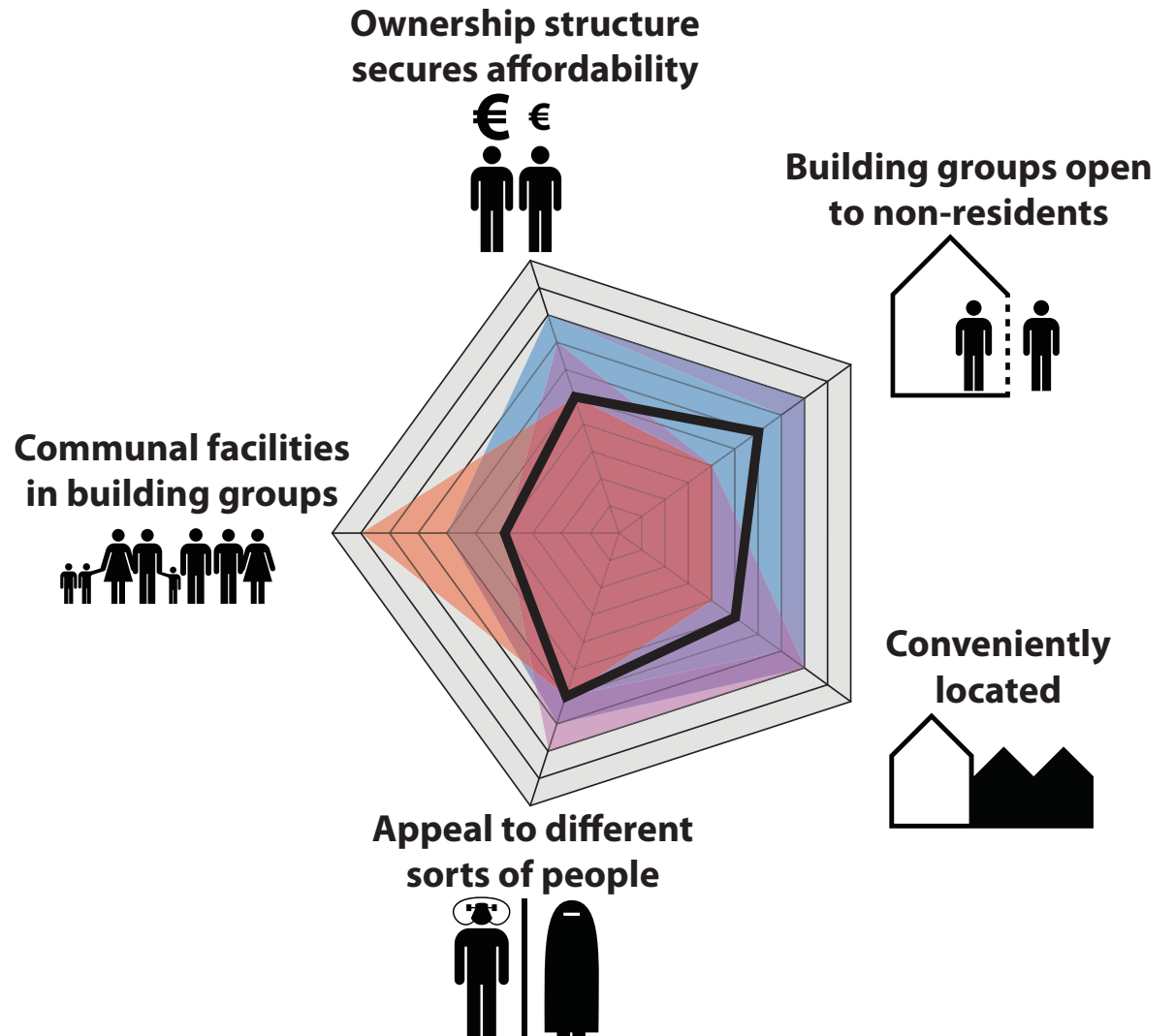
H2: Relevance

2.1. Academic relevance

My graduation project touches upon many current themes, most of which are expressed in academic discourse as well as in society.

The subject of building groups is currently being discussed academically. Tummers (2011) discusses how living in an “intentional community” is currently experiencing a resurgence. According to her, many initiators and scholars see this way of living as “experiments for the transition toward sustainable production and collaborative governance”, while “housing politicians and executive institutes tend to be more sceptical and perceive cooperative self-steered housing as peripheral solutions for a small minority of dwellers” (p1). Tummers also discusses the problem of classification. Though similar projects, as well as policies to encourage them, can be seen in many Western European countries, there are no universal terms used to discuss these. Tummers distinguishes between terms which focus on the development process (like building group or collective private commissioning) and the ones which focus on life in the finished building (like intentional community or co-housing). I choose to use the phrase “building group” to describe the phenomenon of people building their homes together, because it focuses on the development phase without being tied to any specific project or policy.

Building groups have also been the subject of previous graduation theses, which focus more upon economic and policy aspects of the subject rather than the idealistic features. One example of this is Otter (2012), who focuses on the policy aspect, by comparing the policies and institutional networks which contribute to the popularity of building groups in Denmark to those of the Netherlands, to see how they can be supported in the Netherlands as well. Another example is Bakker (2012), who focuses on the roles developers can continue to play when development is done through building groups: process coordinator, land developer or backup apartment owner. This way academia is trying to understand how the increasing popularity of building groups might change the institutional relations behind the development process. This corresponds with my intention to restructure the development process for a specific neighborhood.



Radar chart which scores neighbourhoods being developed by building groups on different characteristics. (own diagram)

Bankrupt Rochdale-boss drives a Bentley
De Telegraaf

Spies demands enquiry of corporation Vitaal Wonen
NRC Handelsblad

Grabby Erik Staal leaves Vestia in distress
RTL Z

NRC Research: fraud at Laurentius corporation more widespread
NRC Handelsblad

Fraud inquiry into Limburg corporation
RTL Z

Headlines describing recent scandals at housing corporations. (own illustration)

“The big society is about changing the way our country is run. No more of a government treating everyone like children who are incapable of taking their own decisions. Instead, let’s treat adults like adults and give them more responsibility over their lives.”

David Cameron

“Aspirational waffle designed to conceal a deeply damaging withdrawal of the state from its responsibilities to the most vulnerable.”

Rowan Williams



Debating the Big Society, David Cameron (photo: Kirsty Wigglesworth) and Rowan Williams (Gareth Fuller/PA).

Another theme of my graduation project is affordable housing. In academic discourse, this is not just seen as a question of individual charity, but as one closely linked to all aspects of urban policy, particularly segregation, integration and urban mix. In his inaugural lecture, Scheffer (2004) tries to summarize the research done on this topic for Amsterdam. Though segregation in Amsterdam is limited compared to comparable cities in other countries, there is a lot of academic controversy about the effectiveness of policies to create a mixed city. According to Scheffer, a lot of this has to do with confusion between the economic composition (mainly about income levels) and the social makeup of the city (mainly about natives and non-natives and about lifestyles), and with confusion about the scale on which diversity is measured (buildings, streets, neighborhoods or quarters). In my graduation project I want to encourage mixing, in particular economic mixing on the scale of a new neighborhood, even though the merits of mixing policies are questionable. Therefore, I want to see if this can be accomplished by creating affordable housing through mutually beneficial relation within building groups, rather than planning by social housing corporations.

2.2. Social relevance

The economic crisis has caused a housing market crisis as well. According to organizations of both renters and home-owners, the organization of the Dutch housing market is inflexible, recklessly financed, requires too much subsidy for both rental and owner-occupied housing, and discourages the construction of new housing (Mulder, Paping, Calon and Hukker 2012).

For these reasons a liberalization of the housing market is expected, but for now this situation continues. At first only private developers stopped investing, but now investments by housing corporations have halted as well. Over the years Dutch housing corporations have transformed from organizations serving their residents to instruments of the welfare state, serving public policy. Corruption scandals have taken away the credibility of the housing corporations’ claim of serving the common good by taking care of the public domain. A devaluating building stock and increased political scrutiny have severely reduced their ability to invest in new housing (Beekers 2010).

Development through building groups is seen as way to circumvent current housing market problems, because it utilizes the personal finances of building groups residents, partially bypassing the financial sector, while still creating a high density apartments. Resuming the production of housing serves a social need. There are long and growing waiting lists for social housing and the Amsterdam region is still expected to grow.

However, the housing market situation can also be seen as a symptom of a wider trend in society: the empowerment of individuals as opposed to institutions. The information age has provided people with tools to do what previously required large corporations or governments: writing encyclopedias, producing electricity, covering news events, and even organizing protests against oppressive regimes (Tegenlicht 2012).

People constructing their own apartments through a building group, bypassing developers and housing corporations, can be seen as one more example of this. It gives people more freedom to shape the way in which they live. This can mean an creating an eccentric kind of architecture, but can also result in idealistically inspired building groups, focusing on topics like sustainability or culture.

This process of self-organization is not just a result of from technological change, it is also a development championed by politicians. Philip Blond's ideas on the 'Big Society' (2009), a conservative communitarianism in which government would create incentives for people set up small trusts to take over where government and big businesses failed, were taken up by David Cameron and played a big role in his victory in the 2010 UK general elections. However, this made the ideal of the big society very controversial, with its Labor detractors claiming it was just a way to justify small government relinquishing its public tasks. According to Drosterij and Peeters (2011) Dutch politicians use this same line of thought to justify their own failures: social problems are not the result of failing government policy but of citizens refusing to take matters into their own hands.

This would put the current attention for development through housing groups in a different light. With governments and housing corporations unable or unwilling to perform their historical role of guiding the physical and social development of the city, they can claim to hand this task over to 'the people' by dividing land into lots and selling these to building groups. This would seem to turn urbanism from an idealistically inspired endeavor into a technocratic procedure. However, practical examples outside of the Netherlands show building groups can also bring new idealism into urban planning. Therefore, this graduation project will combine stimulating self-organization with holding institutions accountable for their public function, in order to create a neighborhood which works socially with minimal top-down control

2.3. Studio WTP relevance: politics

Power struggle

The design will empower those seeking housing in Amsterdam, especially those with modest incomes. Compared to the current situation revolving around the development of Blok o, the aim is to shift power towards those who will be living in Houthaven.

The people

When buildings groups are started by residents instead of professionals there can be more diversity regarding design and kinds of ownership. However, this will require a lot of knowledge about development through building groups, which needs to be easily accessible for both professionals and lay people. A building group started by people who share a common interest could facilitate affordable housing much better than the ones currently under development, because these often have a higher degree of communality. This would make it possible to cut various kinds of costs, for example by sharing facilities



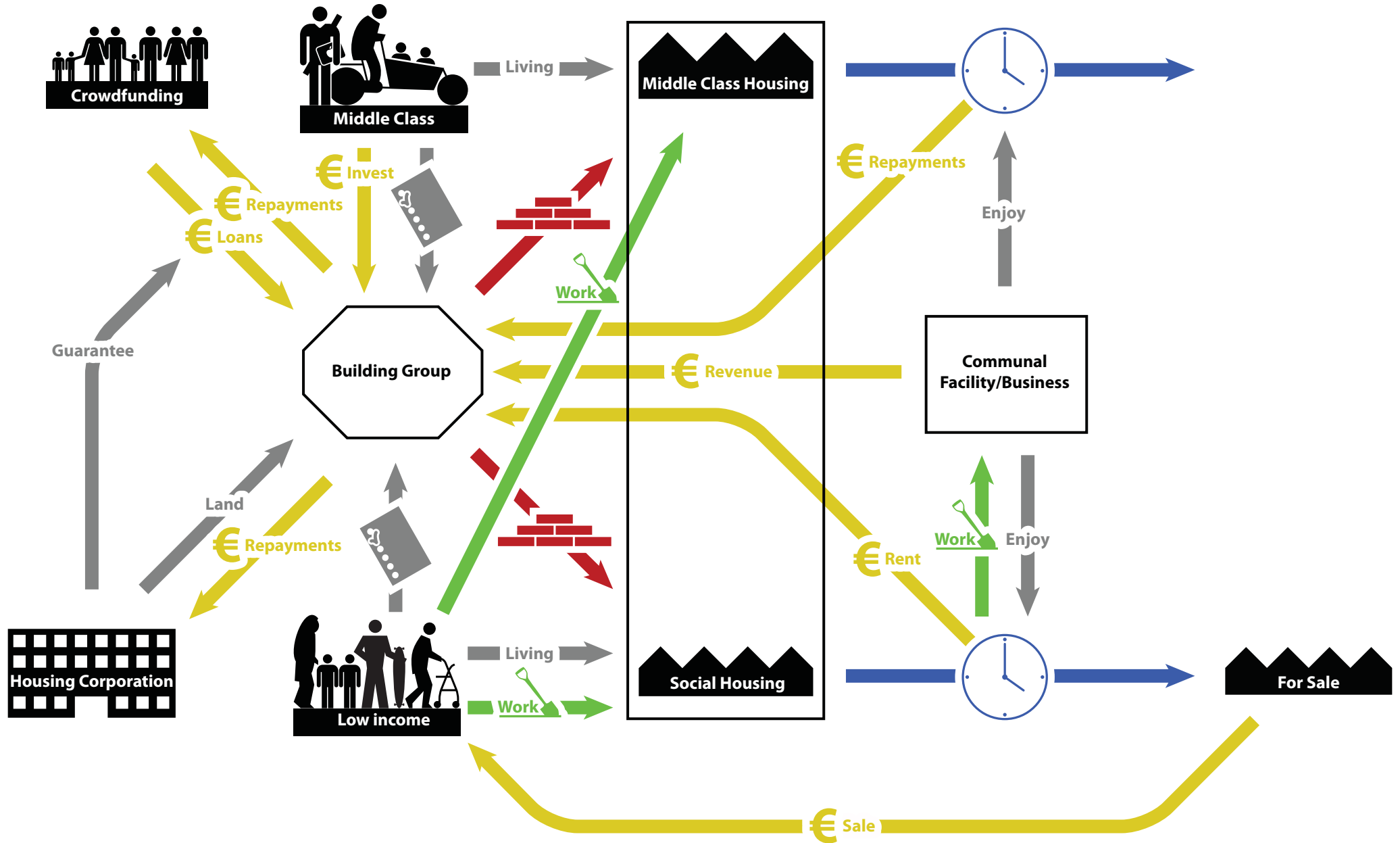
Failing government? We'll tackle that together!

Hands-off government is in your own hands

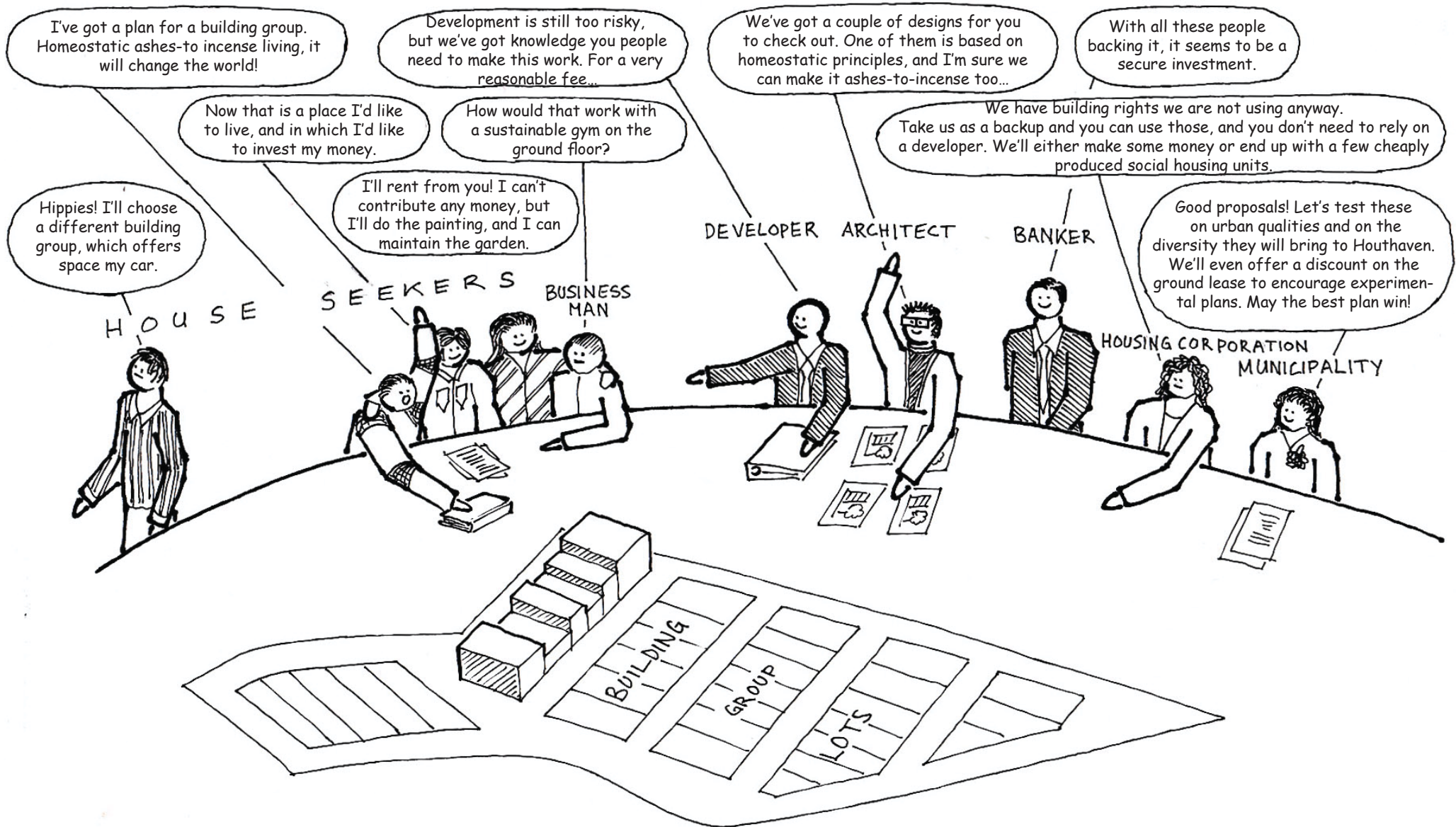
www.whydontyoujustdoityourself.nl

A possible future government campaign? (own illustration)





Realizing affordable housing through mutually beneficial cooperation. (own diagram)



What the actors would think if Houthaven was developed according to this model. (own illustration)

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Your query returned **21** results. This is page **1** out of **4**.

You have replied to **1** project. **2** replies left for this survey.

Sort results by:

LOCATION ▼	TYPE ▲	KEYWORDS	SERVICES	COMMITMENT	WHEN ▲	SIZE ▲	PRICE ▲		
CONTAINERZ Tasmanstraat 358 Amsterdam	1 bedroom appartement		Staying, entertainment, culture, travel	Laundromat, bar, movie/performance room, guest rooms	Bi-annual cleaning, either language exchange or bar duty (Higher education enrollment required)	Directly available	18 m2	€ 350,- /month (DUWO housing corporation) or € 110.000,- to buy	reply now
ECOTYPIA Haarlem Schalkwijk	Patio house (last plots!)		Natural, balanced, children, ecology	Vegetable garden, hydroponic greenhouse, creche, kitchen, private wind farm	Garden work, cooking schedule, babysitting (required certification is reimbursed)	In about 2 years	Up to 150 m2	Around € 800,- (from development collective) or around € 240.000,- to buy	reply now
VOLUME Randstad	2 to 6 bedroom apartments		Large families, play, education, colours	To be decided	To be decided	3-5 years	30 to 120 m2	€ 450,- to € 950,- / month (developer to be decided), € 150.000,- to € 320.000,- to buy	you have replied
VOC MENTALITY Gevleweg 48-60 Amsterdam	6 Townhouses (splittable)		Health, accessibility, convenience, one-level	Shared Pool, 2 electrical cars, gym, live-in nurse, roof garden	Construction of facade and interior (multiple apartments, construction or DIY experience required)	10-15 months	25-200 m2	€ 390,- to € 1.800,- / month (housing corporation Eigen Haard) or € 135.000,- to € 550.000,- to buy	reply now
TRANSIT-X Transformatorweg 240-242, Hoofddorp	Live-work units (4 to 6 units available)		Business, modern, logistics, freedom	Shared storage space (400 m2), garage (250 m2), conference room	Self-renovation, emergency response training, neighbourhood watch program	Ready for renovation (4-6 months)	60-180 m2 (residential only)	€ 650,- to € 1.600,- / month (from Sunnydunes Development) or € 190.000,- to € 490.000,- to buy	reply now
PLAYER PIANO Stavangerweg 12c Amsterdam	2 bedroom apartment		Digital, modern, high-tech, fun and games	Fiber-optic connection, server room, game room, office space, audio studio	Server operation (24-hr standby, CCNA certificate preferred)	Directly available	35 m2	€ 180,- / month (from Oxymoron Architects) or € 170.000,- to buy (with compensation for services)	reply now
1 2 3 4 >next									
ADD YOUR OWN!	For you to decide		For you to decide	For you to decide	For you to decide	For you to decide	For you to decide	For you to decide	advertise now

Proposal for an interactive housing website, blurring the line between housing supply and demand. (own illustration)

or by letting some people do work themselves instead of hiring a contractor. When people can successfully start their own building group, or choose from a more affordable and diverse range of building groups, that would really be an example of citizen empowerment in urbanism.

Public authorities

However, this cannot be done without a change in municipal policy. The development process for Blok o favors business led building groups, but foreign examples show this is not a necessity. Many things can be done to assist individuals in developing a building group. Require building groups to hand in an elaborated idea, rather than a sketch design in order to qualify for a lot, so less professionalism is required in the early phase of forming the building group, like they do in Tbingen. Offer lots to the winners of a competition on urban and social qualities rather than dividing them by lottery, encouraging attributes like sustainability and social diversity, like they do in Vienna. Bundle data on building group designs from various architects and construction companies, like they do in Almere. Collect knowledge on building groups and make it available for example by providing building groups with a subsidized building consultant. And finally, by lowering the ground lease a bit, building groups will have more possibilities for come up with designs which are both innovative and economically viable, from which the municipality can pick the best ones.

Some of these measures cost money. On the other hand, when building groups plan and manage part of the physical and social infrastructure of Houthaven, the municipality can save money on that. It is important for the public to check whether the municipality (as well as municipal organizations like project bureau Houthaven) makes deals with building groups which are socially as well as financially advantageous, and whether they can make building groups keep their promises.

Institutions

The extent to which housing corporations can get involved in the development of Houthaven depends a lot on regulations on a national scale. However, housing corporations and building groups could both benefit from cooperation. By serving as a backup investor who purchases leftover units, building groups can provide corporations with cheaply produced housing. At the same time, the assurance there will be a buyer for all units will limit the financial risks for a building group and benefit them in negotiating a mortgage. Building groups initiated by private developers do not need such a backup, since taking risks is part of their business model.

Businesses

In this model, building professionals like developers and architects will no longer be the initiators of building groups, but serve them as clients again. Building groups need a lot of knowledge in the development phase of a building group. They could hire this from a developer or architect, which would put them in the role of a consultant rather than a developer. Developers could also take a backup role, comparable to that which housing corporation could take. Architects are needed for the design. This needs to take into account the wishes of the building group members, which will sometimes contradict each other and put the architect in the role of a negotiator. This model should offer them opportunities to make money as well, working for a fee instead of as an investor.

Apart from building professionals, this model would also make it easier for other businesses to cooperate with a building group. Especially for idealistic entrepreneurs, working together with a building group which shares their purpose could offer opportunities to mix living and working and to do business together. Finally, when development through building groups becomes more common, banks will be more familiar with lending to them. With so many parties working together in a building group, it will be easier to convince banks to invest in one.

Power distribution

The aim of my graduation theme is empowering house seekers through building groups. This change of power can't result of the execution of a plan alone. Successful examples from other countries usually require a municipal plan of offering lots to building groups, but they are also the result a culture of development through building group, which offers knowledge, role models and encouragement in the startup phase. This is not something which can be implemented top-down, but it can be encouraged.

To encourage the bottom-up formation of building groups a website could be used to bring people together. Instead of websites which only have the supply of housing, like Woningnet or Funda, it needs to be interactive and show building groups in many different stages of development, from concept to finished apartment. It should show different attributes of a housing group not as static properties but as things which are being debated by prospective residents and other investors, and highlight mutually beneficial deals being made.

At the same time, this kind of development also has urban requirements and challenges. For example, the appropriate size for lots has to be determined, as well as the number of lots which can be developed at one time. Public space has to be flexible because there is a lot less predictability in the locations of services and of parking demand. It is also necessary to rethink how residents of building groups might use the public space in a different way. Can building groups also take over the maintenance of the public domain, and how this should be organized? These questions will need to be answered in the final product.

SAMEN TEGEN DE SLOOP & UITVERKOOP VAN AMSTERDAM



Flyer against the sale of social housing. (source: Stop Afbraak Sociale Huisvesting - SASH)



March in favour of affordable housing and against the demolition of social housing. (source: Stop Afbraak Sociale Huisvesting - SASH)

2.4. Ethical issues

Conflicts of values

An important conflict of values relevant to my project is that of the welfare state, which values economic equality, versus neoliberalism, which values the free market as an organizing principle. Since the aim of my graduation project is providing affordable housing through building groups, it fits better with the welfare state approach. The ideal is that housing in the center of Amsterdam should also be accessible for low income people. This ideal has historically been defended by public authorities, especially in the Labor dominated municipality of Amsterdam, as well as by housing corporations.

However, this ideal is not shared by everybody. In recent years, more people have started to see subsidizing housing as a wasteful use of taxpayer money, distorting the efficient organization which would result from leaving housing to the free market. For example, the high percentage of social housing has been seen as a good thing, but is currently seen as problematic. The graduation project also incorporates some neoliberal values, because it wants to realize its goals through mutually beneficial agreements, mostly between private individuals and companies, and with only limited accommodation by governments and housing associations. The scheme does not choose one extreme, but leans more towards the welfare state approach.

Another conflict of values is between individualism and collectivism. The graduation project promotes a collective way of living. Living collectively is not just a preference, but indicates specific values like cooperation and taking care of each other. Living individually carries specific values with it as well, for example self-sufficiency. The emphasis on collectivism does not appeal to all house seekers, and they have plenty of choice in more individualized housing. However, experiences from other countries show there might well be a hidden market for a more collective way of living.

3. Methodology and phasing

3.1. Methodology

A systematic analysis of some precedents, looking at both the political system in which they are realized, the distribution of lots, and the way building groups organize themselves.

Based upon this analysis and the research from the P2 report, I want to redesign the urban plan of Houthaven. This will be done in a way which is optimal for development through building groups, specifically building groups which can assure affordability. This will result in a list of criteria by which to judge designs.

The design phase will combine the creation of a system for the division of lots with drawing an urban plan. Using process diagrams, multiple ways to distribute lots will be compared, one of which will be elaborated upon. At the same time an urban design will be made, consisting of a basic urban plan, a lot division map and rules for the use of these lots. Again, multiple scenarios will be used. Each of those will be based upon a different building typology, and contain all three elements in a basic form. One of the scenarios will be developed as the final design.

When creating a system in which building groups realize social housing, an important element is the way in which building groups organize themselves, responding to the context and outside incentives. Because the subject of my graduation project deals with self-organization, this is not something I want to design myself. Instead, I want to present the preliminary design to a couple of people looking to start a building group, to see how they would deal with the conditions resulting from my plan, and to see how affordable the resulting building group will be. This information will be used to make adjustments to the final lot distribution system and design.

The final project will consist of the lot division system, an urban design, and of a visualization of how the building groups could function, based upon the review phase.

3.2. Phasing

Strategize the design

The phasing which goes with the methodology as described in the previous paragraph can be seen on the calendar to the right.



Schedule for the MSc 4 semester. (own image)

4. Theoretical framework

4.1. Introduction

This theory paper aims to explain how development through building groups can help to create an open city.

In recent years, a new kind of housing is becoming popular in Western Europe. In first place it is a new system to build housing. Individuals choose to form an association to build their houses or apartment building together, at their own risk, with less reliance on institutions like developers or housing corporations. Secondly, it describes a type of housing with additional shared facilities. Because people often gather into these associations based on a shared ideal or lifestyle, they have the common ground to make these a success.

Many different terms are used to describe this development. The first section of this paper describes these terms, and explains why the phrase ‘building groups’ was chosen to describe them in this paper. After this, some of the values which have contributed to the current attention for building groups are listed.

After this, the ideal of the open city will be examined. Its meaning will be explained as well as its relevance for urban development, particularly in the context of Amsterdam. Then, the qualifications ascribed to building groups are compared to the qualities of the open city. Based upon this, criteria are developed which answer the main question: How can development through building groups help to create an open city?

Finally, by looking at three practical examples, it will be shown how these criteria can be used to see whether a particular housing group contributes to creating an open city.

4.2. What terms are being used to describe building groups?

When discussing these kinds of self-organizing developments, an important problem is the absence of a consistent terminology to describe them, both in academia and in practice. There are many definitions, which often only partially overlap (Tummers 2011). To understand what is meant by building groups, it is useful to describe and compare the terms used by different scholars to describe such projects.

CoHousing

The word ‘CoHousing’ is used mostly in the English speaking world. Lafond et al. (2012) say ‘CoHousing’ “emphasizes collaborative and self-managed social architectures” (p.17). This notion is quite similar to ‘intentional communities’. However, in ‘CoHousing’ the daily communal life is central, whereas in ‘intentional communities’ the values residents share are most important.

Intentional communities

Tummers (2011) uses the phrase ‘intentional communities’ to describe this phenomenon. Although no definition is given, ‘intentional communities’ emphasizes the values and ideals which unite residents. Tummers contrasts this with other terms, like ‘building group’ and ‘CPO’, which focus more on the process of realizing housing.

Collective Private Commissioning

The phrase ‘Collective Private Commissioning (CPC)’ is used exclusively in the Netherlands. It focuses on the process of building rather than living. Otter (2012) mostly uses the definition of the Housing Experiments Steering Group (SEV): “CPC is a kind of commissioning in which a collective of like-minded individuals acquire land and decide collectively how and with which parties the houses are realized and the private space (and sometimes even the public space) is furnished.” (p.13), but argues reuse projects can also be a kind of CPC. In practice, the phrase CPC is often also used for collective building projects initiated and managed by a commercial party, which severely limits the freedom of residents to choose with which parties the development is realized.

Building groups

Temel et al. (2009) derive their terminology from the German context. They use the phrase ‘building communities’ (Baugemeinschaften) to describe the general phenomenon, and use ‘building group’ (Baugruppe) to describe particular examples of the same. They define it as “building new housing based on thorough collective resident participation” (p.4). Temel et al. prefer this definition because it stresses self-determination within a community, rather than older phrases like ‘participation project’, which focus on community life.

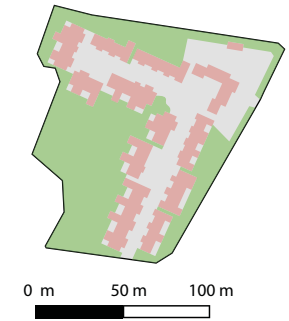
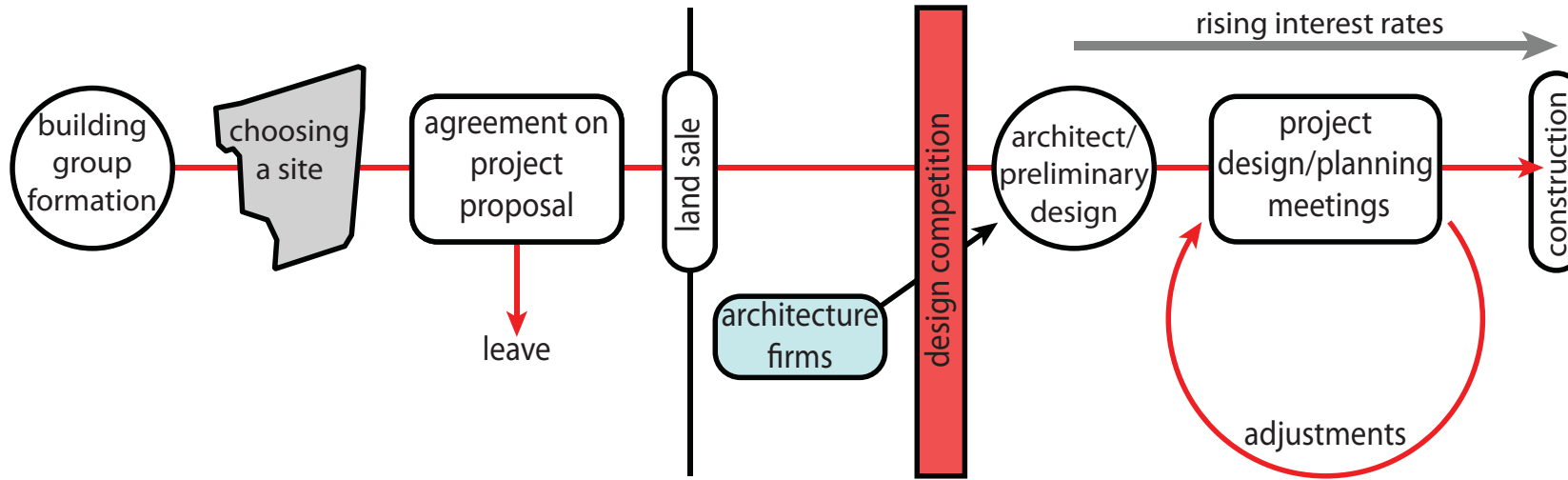
Common-Interest housing Developments

McKenzie (2003) uses the word ‘common-interest housing developments (CIDs)’ to describe this phenomenon. This is a broad term, which includes “gated communities, townhouse and condominium projects, and other planned communities” (p.1). McKenzie does not provide a definition of CIDs, but lists five characteristics all projects share:

<i>Common ownership:</i>	At least some of the space is owned by all residents collectively.
<i>Private land use controls:</i>	Residents are obliged to follow a set of rules.
<i>Private government:</i>	Automatic membership of an association to make and enforce the rules.
<i>Master planning:</i>	The development is designed for a specific target audience.
<i>Security measures:</i>	Entry controls are installed to keep out non-residents.

I choose to use the phrase “building group” to describe the phenomenon of people building their homes together, because urbanism focuses more on the development, rather than the living phase. It is already used in the Dutch context to describe individual examples of CPC. Also, in Germany, a country with a strong tradition of development through building groups, the word Baugruppe is used with the exact same meaning.

Trudeslund - Birkerød - Denmark

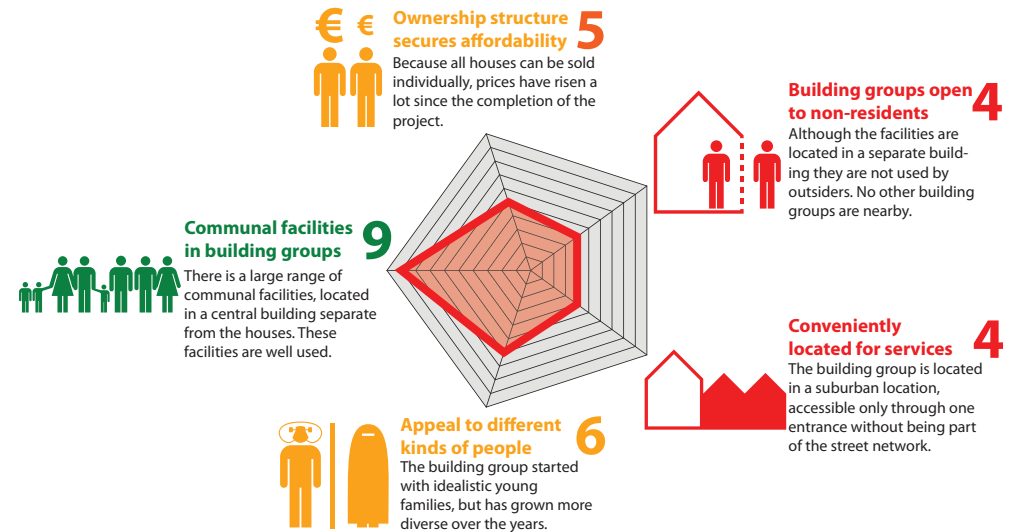


Process diagram for Trudeslund. (own image)

Plan view of Trudeslund. (own image)



Aerial view of Trudeslund. (source: Google Earth)



Evaluation of Trudeslund. (own image)

4.3. What values lie beneath the current popularity of building groups?

Just as each of the authors give their own definition to development through “building groups”, they also have their own ideas on which values make this idea popular at the moment. All of them mention the current interest in building groups, and want to explain this based on the benefit it brings house-seekers or policy makers.

- Lafond et al. think CoHousing improves communication between people in a housing project in the first place. Secondly, it enables experimentation with new sustainable concepts. Thirdly, “CoHousing, depending on ownership structures – but also on local housing, rent and land use policies – can (...) feed gentrification, but before all else be a force for integration and affordability” (p.17) because its ownership structure discourages long-term speculation.
- According to Tummers, intentional communities enable people to organize with like-minded people in pursuit of an ideal. Three important values which bring people to live in this way are self-management, sustainability and keeping distance from mainstream society.
- For Otten, the main reason CPC is commendable is that it gives people control over their own living environment. CPC is also encouraged because it contributes to social cohesion, but this is up to debate.
- As reasons to promote building groups, Temel et al. mention the freedom for people to shape their own environments, tailored towards the needs of their group, with more contact with neighbors.
- McKenzie singles out the blurring of the border between private and public as the interesting aspect of CID’s. This can result in inventive solutions on three dimensions of this separation: access (how open?), agency (how governmental?), and interest (concerns how many?).

Many of the reasons these authors mention overlap each other. When summarizing, you can find four main reasons for the popularity of building groups. All four reasons can be seen both as a benefit to the residents and as a benefit to society:

- Building groups encourages good relations between neighbors. (Mentioned by Lafond et al., Otten, Temel et al. and McKenzie.)
- Building groups enable residents to control their own living environment. (Mentioned by Tummers, Otten and Temel et al.)
- People can express their idealism through building groups, especially by living sustainably. (Mentioned by Lafond et al. and Tummers.)
- Some building groups guarantee their long-term affordability through their ownership structure. (Mentioned by Lafond et al. and McKenzie.)

4.4. What is the open city?

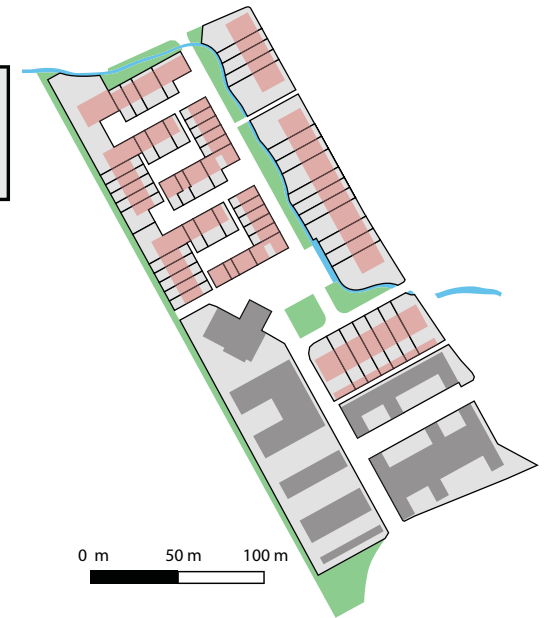
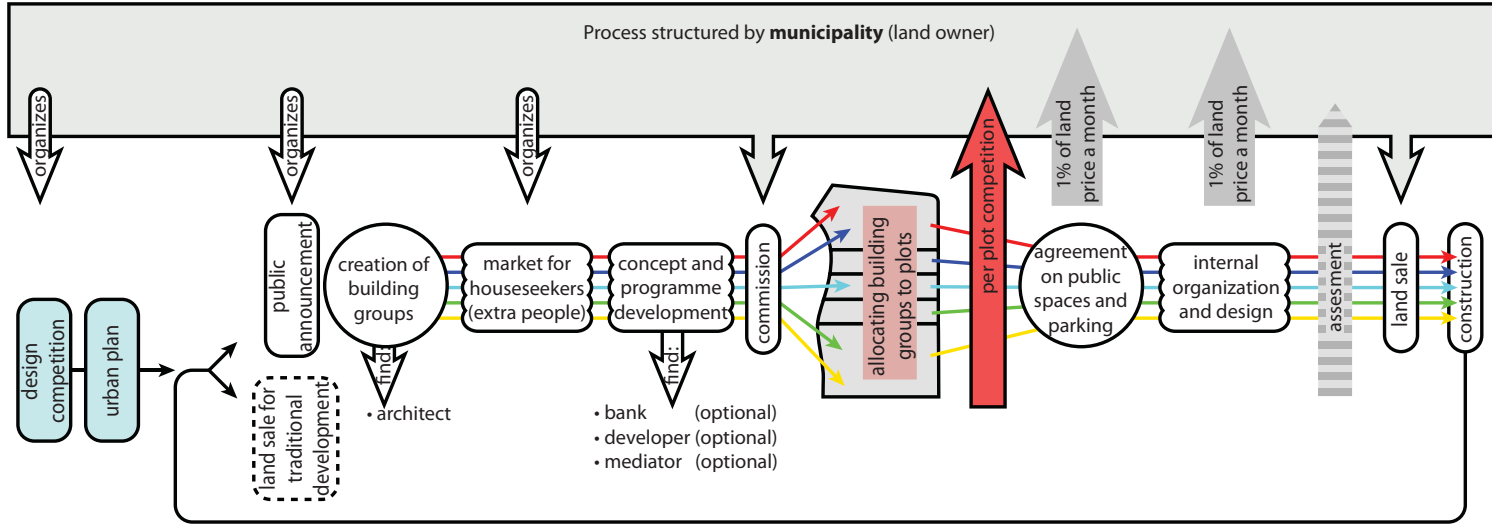
This ideal of the open city is an urban translation of Karl Popper’s (1962) ideas about an open society: a society in which the values of individuality, criticism and humanitarianism are so deeply rooted it is immune to totalitarianism. According to Rieniets (2009), an open city is a city “open to be used and shared by all”, and which holds “the capacity to integrate social differences” (p.15). Rieniets lists four threats to the open city:

- Segregation:* Mass migration has changed the way cities and citizens work. Cities no longer have an urban culture, but they become nodes in a global network of people, commodities and ideas. Whether such nodal cities are still ‘open’ “depends on the degree to which newcomers gain access to the existing networks and are incorporated in the dominant elites” (Reijndorp 2009, p.93).
- Insecurity:* Feelings of insecurity have set off a transformation aimed to make cities safer. There are two approaches for this: redesigning public space for ubiquitous observation rather than a meeting place, or isolating groups with a common interest in their own bunkers. Both of these see an open city, used and shared by all, as a problem.
- Privatization:* Today, even middle class people can afford to withdraw into such a bunker. This self-imposed isolation is not just to avoid the dangers of the city. Privatized services also enable them to enjoy the luxury of avoiding contact with the non-privatized ‘open’ city as much as possible.
- Cultural divide:* The internet has made maintaining contacts across geographical boundaries effortless. This has enabled people to live part of their life in virtual communities, rather than being part of the locally bound urban life. A city is not open when its residents live parallel lives in virtual communities (Rieniets 2009).

Scheffer (2004) summarizes various kinds of research done on Amsterdam to see to what extent this city is an open society, touching on all the same themes as Rieniets:

- Segregation:* Amsterdam is becoming a nodal city. The welfare space has thus far limited the spatial segregation between natives and non-natives. Nonetheless, the Amsterdam ring road is becoming a cultural divider (p.13-15). Though migrants make material progress, both natives and non-natives concentrate their friendships ever more on members of their own group, because of increasing segregation (p.20). In this regard, Amsterdam is becoming less open.

Mühlenviertel - Tübingen - Germany

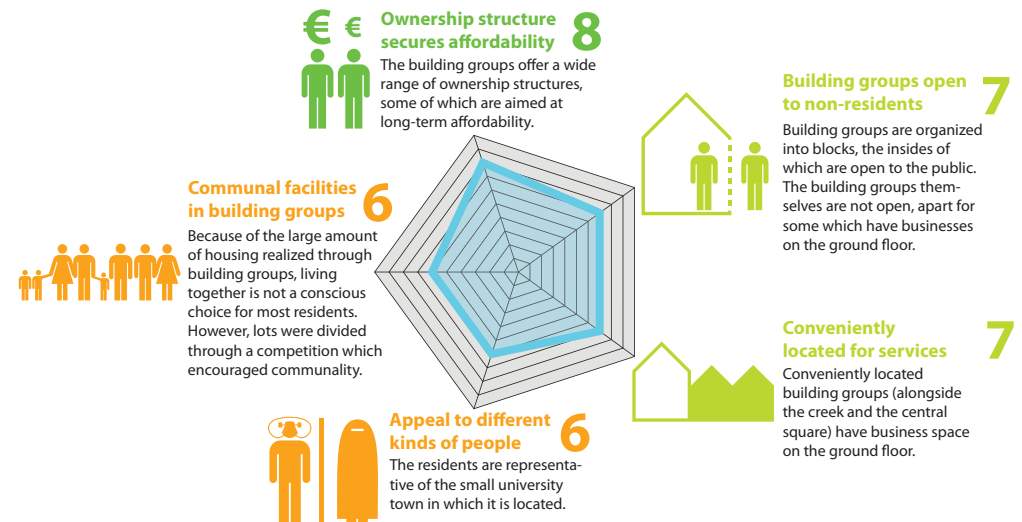


Process diagram for Mühlenviertel. (own image)

Plan view of Mühlenviertel. (own image)



Aerial view of Mühlenviertel. (source: Google Earth)



Evaluation of Mühlenviertel. (own image)

Insecurity and privatization: Scheffer recognizes the tendency of the people to withdraw into their own “walled micro welfare and security states” (p.35-36) for the city of Amsterdam, and regards this as a threat to Amsterdam’s openness. Good fences do not automatically make good neighbors. However, he sees increasing safety by designing defensible spaces which enable ubiquitous observation as a solution to this withdrawal, in contrast to Rieniets, who considers this part of the problem (p.36).

Cultural divide: The internet was said to reduce the importance of space, making people ‘footloose’ (p.34). Scheffer fears the open city is threatened by a cultural schism between an upper class of global citizens and a growing mass of locally bound people who resent mainstream society and proclaim: “first our own!”. The debate on tolerating diversity does nothing to bridge this divide (p.30-31). Citizenship requires a spatial dimension, a connection between social cohesion and physical space. The example of Amsterdam’s Western Garden Cities shows realizing such a connection remains problematic, even though it was a major concern during the urban redesign (p.34).

Rieniets and Scheffer discuss largely the same issues when it comes to realizing an open city: Mass migration, insecurity, privatization and a cultural divide. In addition, Scheffer makes clear all of these themes are relevant to the current development of Amsterdam.

4.5. Where is the overlap between the ideals of the mixed city and those of building groups?

These same categories can be used to look at building groups. Some of the qualities of building groups can make a city more open, others less open.

Segregation

Because lots for building groups are usually created in new developments, they are typically located in wealthier parts of the city. When building groups use an ownership structure which upholds affordability, they can counteract at least the material aspect of segregation. However, many building groups have an ownership structure in which homes can be resold with very little restrictions.

For a building group to counteract segregation and contribute to the open city, its internal structure should be planned to secure long-term affordability. An example of this could be a building group co-owned by all residents, who pay rent to the cooperation instead of owning their own apartment.

Insecurity and privatization

Living in a community of like minded people, offering certain services for which you would normally need to leave the house, can be seen as a kind of privatization, making cities less open. It depends whether the building groups is seen as a well-protected unit, or if the services they offer are made available to people from the outside. This is especially important when development through building groups is seen as a way to grow the social aspects of a neighborhood organically, instead of providing social services top-down. Building groups can choose to open up communal facilities like a dining hall, laundry room or garden to others. Businesses located inside a building group can also open up a community to the larger world.

Whether the facilities offered by a building group are open to a wider public depends on the building group itself, but also on the urban form. The plot division, building typology, positioning of the garden and the public spaces all determine how visible and accessible a building group can be to outsiders. Security is also an important concern. Crime can dissuade building groups from opening up to the outside world.

Cultural divide

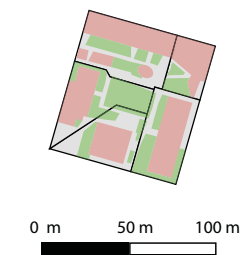
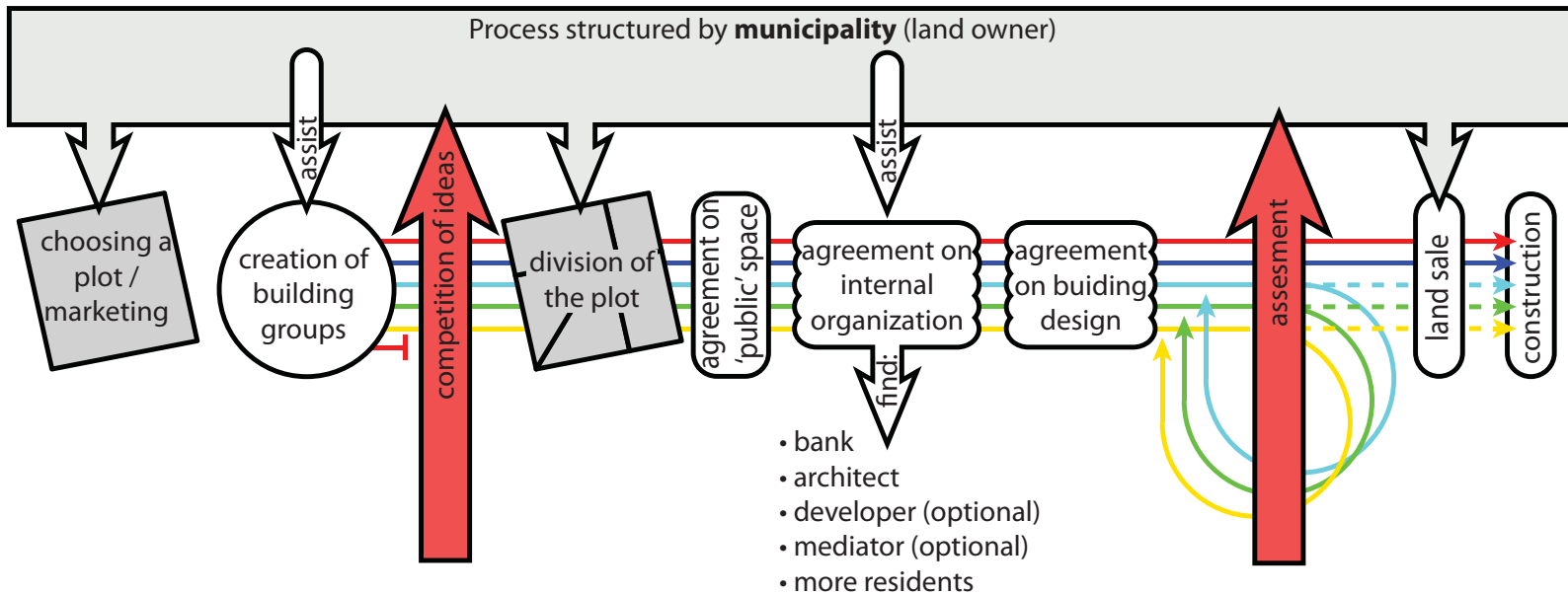
Building groups empower residents to take control over their living environments together, which creates a strong bond between them. A risk associated with building groups is that they gather people with a similar outlook on life, closing them off to the outside world. Building groups tend to be somewhat homogeneous, since joining a building group is an active choice. This is part of the reason why they encourage people to be good neighbors. When this makes people engaged with their direct surroundings rather than global virtual networks, it can be seen to promote the open city.

Whether building groups contribute to a cultural divide also depends on what the residents of a building group have in common. In a typical housing project, homogeneity is caused by people choosing to move there, based upon disposable income and lifestyle. Building groups can form around other things people have in common, like a certain hobby, health condition or ideal. When traditional factors attracting people to a home remain in place, but an extra common interest is added, a more diverse group of residents is sometimes the result. However, strong adherence to one ideal can also make a building group closed off to outsiders. The kind of common ground which binds the residents can make a building group open or closed.

4.6. Which building groups are successful in reaching these goals?

This question will be answered by looking at literature on a three neighborhoods developed through housing groups. Each of these will be briefly evaluated on the criteria resulting from the previous paragraph, checking whether this can be seen as a result from the way the development process was structured.

D13 Aspern - Vienna - Austria

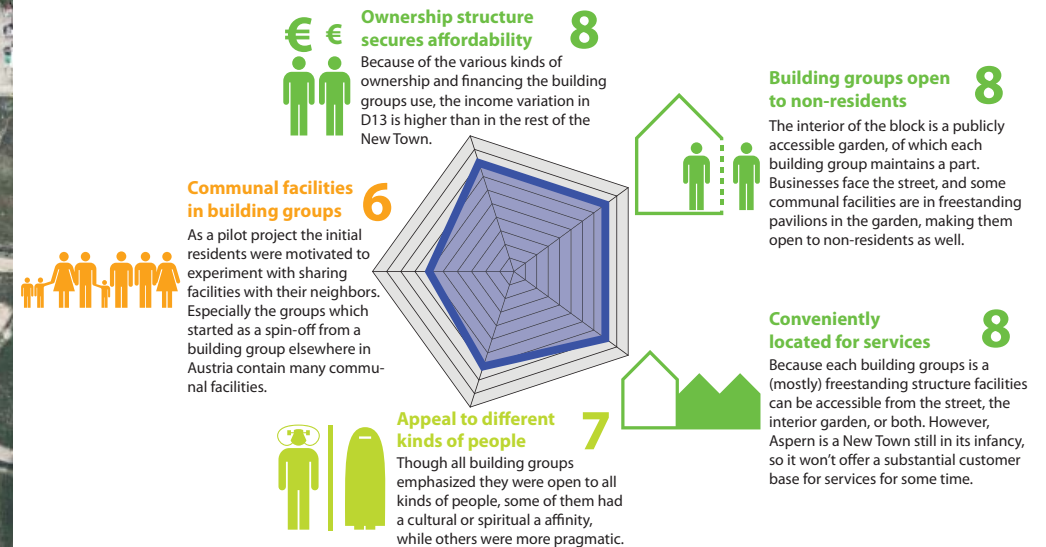


Process diagram for D13 Aspern. (own image)

Plan view of D13 Aspern. (own image)



Aerial view of D13 Aspern. (source: Google Earth)



Evaluation of D13 Aspern. (own image)

Trudeslund

Trudeslund is one of the oldest and best known building groups. It is located in the Danish town of Birkerød, a suburb of Copenhagen. It was initiated by a group of idealistic young families in the seventies. They found a plot designated for development and convinced the municipality to let them develop it as a building group. After a self-organized architectural competition they hired an architecture firm and started into a long process of collaborative design, in which everybody had to agree. The final result was a design with low-rise houses along two pedestrian streets, with a communal house in the center. A large part of the site was intentionally left undeveloped (Durrett and McKamant 2011).

- Ownership structure secures affordability: Because all houses can be sold individually, prices have risen a lot since the completion of the project.
- Communal facilities in building groups: There is a large range of communal facilities, located in a central building separate from the houses, and they are well used.
- Building groups open to non-residents: Although the facilities are located in a separate building they are not used by outsiders. No other building groups are nearby.
- Conveniently located: The building group is located in a suburban location, accessible only through one entrance without being part of the street network.
- Appeal to different sorts of people: The building group started with idealistic young families, but has grown more diverse over the years.

Muehlenviertel

The Muehlenviertel in the German city of Tübingen is a neighborhood developed mostly through building groups. Tübingen is a university town, which has in the last two decades transformed a large former military site in a mixed urban area, almost entirely through building groups. This was the result of a municipal policy, with urban quality as the most important goal. This made it possible to develop the Muehlenviertel within a short time. About half of the site was developed through building groups, the other half consisted of various kinds of assisted living projects (Guetschow and Soehlke 2012).

- Ownership structure secures affordability: The building groups offer a wide range of ownership structures, some of which are aimed at long-term affordability.
- Communal facilities in building groups: Because of the large amount of housing realized through building groups, living together is not a conscious choice for most residents. However, lots were divided through a competition which encouraged communality.
- Building groups open to non-residents: Not known.
- Conveniently located: Conveniently located building groups (alongside the creek and the central square) have business space on the ground floor.
- Appeal to different sorts of people: The residents are representative of the small university town in which it is located.

Ibba Europakwartier

Ik bouw betaalbaar in Almere (Ibba) is an initiative by the municipality of Almere and a housing corporation to enable the creation of affordable owner-occupied housing. They set up an organization which sells lots and provides various services, including partial loans, to people who want to build a house. The program is only open to those within a specific income bracket. One of the projects within this program is Ibba Europakwartier. This proposed housing block consists of small lots for affordable single family housing, with larger lots for building groups on the corners. The housing groups are initiated by the Ibba organization itself, but otherwise use the same financial instruments (Ik bouw betaalbaar in Almere 2012).

- Ownership structure secures affordability: There are little restrictions on selling houses or apartments in Ibba. However, as long as the extra loans are not repaid, the Ibba organization shares in any value increase.
- Communal facilities in building groups: The individual lots are unsuitable for communal facilities, and the preliminary design for the building groups is basic, optimized for affordability, and not expected to contain any shared facilities either.
- Building groups open to non-residents: The building groups are not expected to be open to the public.
- Conveniently located: Because the block is part of the regular urban tissue, it is theoretically well suited to contain businesses and services.
- Appeal to different sorts of people: Because of its affordability and the limited range of options for people who want to build their own house, Ibba Almere attracts various kinds of people, both from Almere and elsewhere.

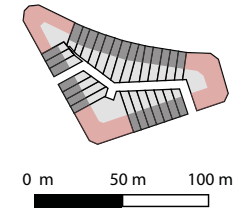
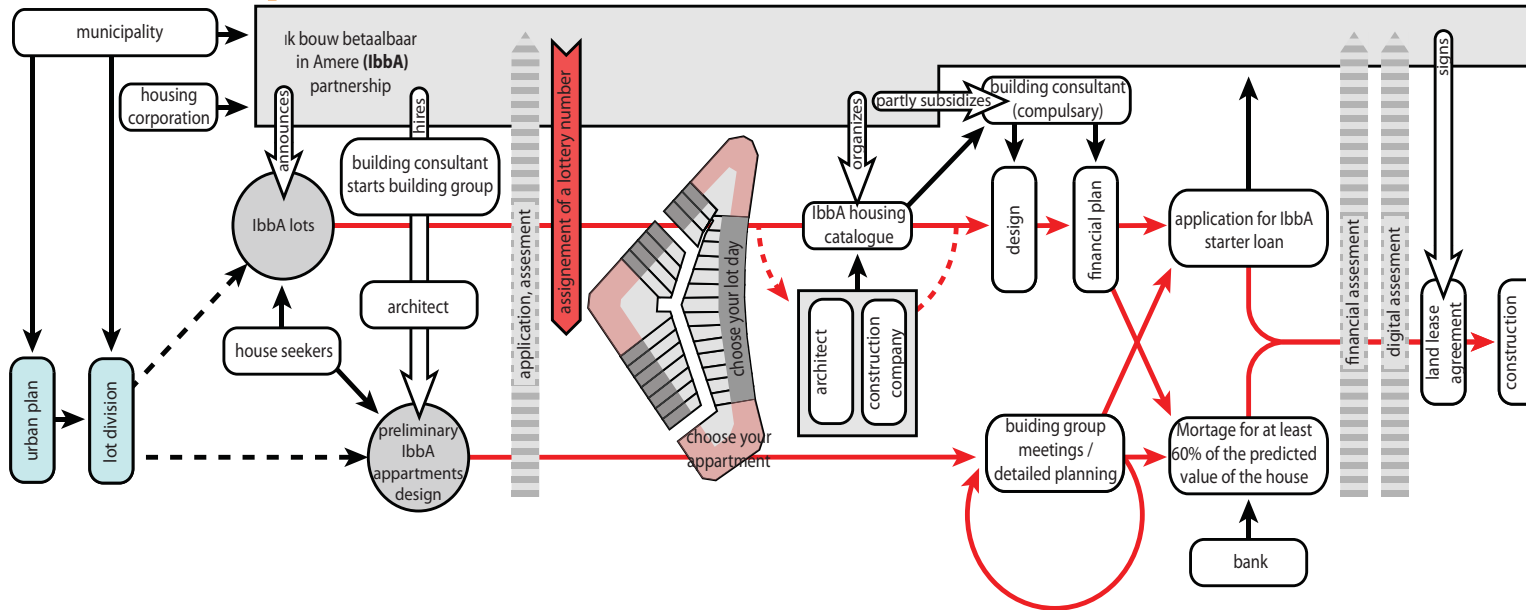
4.7. Conclusions

There is some agreement on the values which are behind the popularity of building groups: Encouraging good relations between neighbors, enabling residents to take control of their own environment, making people express their idealism and guaranteeing long-term affordability. These values partially overlap with those of the ideals of the open city. Combining these, criteria can be defined to assess whether a building group contributes to an open city. These criteria are:

- Does the ownership structure of the building group secure affordability?
- Does the building group contain communal facilities?
- Is the building group open to non-residents?
- Is the building group conveniently located for providing services?
- Does the building group appeal to different kinds of people?

When applying these criteria to judge real examples, it is shown that these can help to identify the characteristics which make housing groups and the cities in which they are located more or less open.

Ibba Europakwartier - Almere - Netherlands

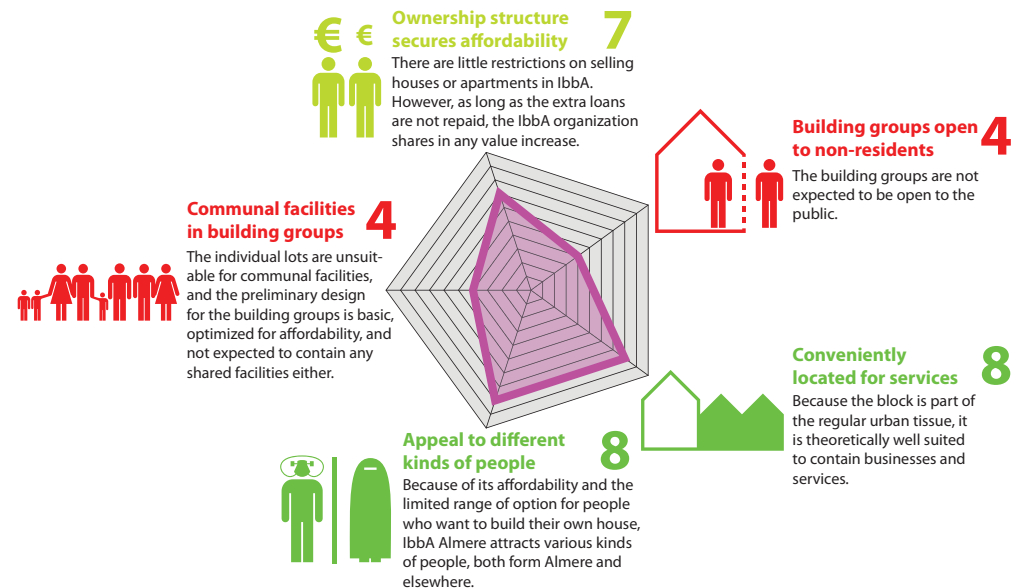


Process diagram for Ibba Europakwartier. (own image)

Plan view of Ibba Europakwartier. (own image)



Aerial view of Ibba Europakwartier. (source: Google Earth)



Evaluation of Ibba Europakwartier. (own image)

5. Preliminary results

5.1. Research findings

Building groups are gaining popularity in many countries. Building groups enable people to shape their own living environment to a large extent. With the economic crisis making large investors reluctant, people who build their own house are seen as a good way to keep construction going. This fits into the picture of a world in which more power goes to individuals and small groups, at the expense of large institutions.

Building is a politically charged topic. In the Netherlands, the influence of the welfare state can be seen in the requirement to build a certain percentage of social housing, and to take care of the social structure of a neighborhood. Building groups are also politically charged, but in a very different way. Many people see living in a building group as a way to turn their private ideals into a way of life, especially when it comes to sustainability. It is difficult to transition from one kind of idealism into the other, especially when it comes to the value of the city as accessible and affordable for everybody.

When looking at real examples of building groups, it becomes clear they are not just the result of people and ideas. The system for providing lots and the culture of the building profession plays an important role as well. Especially in the Netherlands, large investors are often still involved, although at a slightly greater distance.

When turning the questions from the previous chapter into requirements, the following requirements can be set for building groups:

- The ownership structure of the building groups should secure affordability.
- The building groups should contain communal facilities.
- The building groups should be open to non-residents.
- The building groups should be conveniently located for providing services.
- The building groups should appeal to different kinds of people.

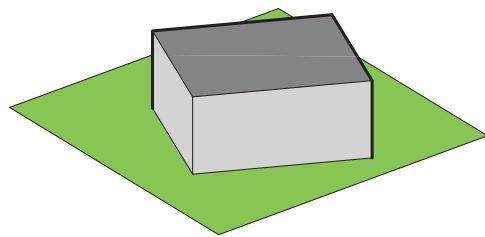
5.2. Design requirements derived from the research findings

Building groups which have the qualities listed above are in an excellent position to create affordable housing, while ensuring a good social structure for the neighborhood. However, taking self-organization as a starting point, these are qualities which have to be organized by building groups themselves. The process design for the division in lots, as well as the urban design, should encourage those qualities rather than prescribe them.

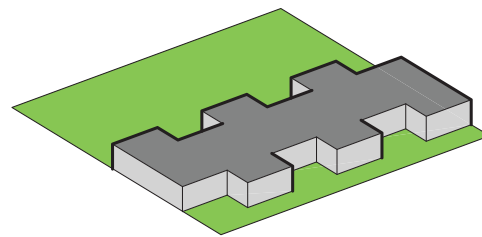
Taking 'best practices' from the reference projects for each of the five requirements for building groups, requirements can also be set for the process design and urban design.



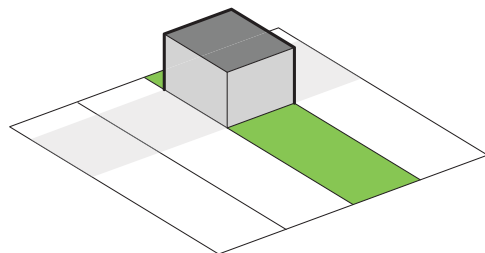
First idea. (own image)



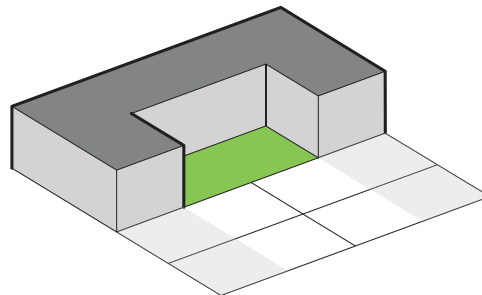
Aspern-like design



Trudslund-like design



Muehlenviertel-like design



Europakwartier-like design

affordable ownership structure:

Taking some of the building groups of D13 Aspern as an example, the building groups can be communally owned, with people renting from their building group.

communal facilities:

The communal house of Trudslund, in which the communal facilities are located separately from the houses, could serve as a typological example.

open to non-residents:

D13 Aspern could be a model for this, because it is composed of detached buildings with a communal garden surrounding it. These gardens are open to everybody and add up to one green space.

conveniently located:

The integration of the building groups and affordable lots into the rest of the urban tissue, IbbA Europakwartier can serve as an example.

appeal to different people:

The wide range of building groups of the Muehlenviertel make it a good example for a neighborhood attracting different kinds of people.

How to combine these sometimes contradictory requirements is a question for the design stage. For each requirement different solutions are possible, and put together there are a lot more. A couple of those will be combined into scenarios.

5.3. Design pitch

The current urban plan for Houthaven is restrictive and expensive. It will be redone in a way which is optimal for self-organization: development by small groups of people united in building groups. When new affordable housing and services are no longer provided by housing corporations, it should be done by building groups. However, building groups should be encouraged to do so through process design and urban design.

This means designing a process in which building groups which contain affordable housing, provide facilities to the neighborhood, and have the support of many organizations get the best lots the soonest. It also means giving support to people who want to start a building group, but need knowledge and partners to make a feasible plan. Actively participation residents are necessary to make building groups affordable.

It also means an urban design which is open to the outside world, contains quality public spaces and offers transparency, so people can see what each building group is about. It should also be flexible, so each building groups is able to realize their own ideal as much as possible.

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