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Title                    Cohousing: a Utopian Property Alternative?

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## **Cohousing: a Utopian Property Alternative?**

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### **1. Introduction**

Nothing is more important for our way of life than where and how we live. Cohousing is an alternative way of organising domestic living arrangements which looks, at first glance, to be quite different from the way most of us live. Cohousing represents a way of living together. For example, some spaces within cohousing communities are collectively owned and residency involves signing up to membership agreements, attending regular community meetings, sharing meals, undertaking regular labour commitments and participating in group projects. Residency involves membership of a group which seeks a 'neighbourly' or 'community-oriented' way of life, usually in an urban context. Of course, other people live in neighbourhoods and at least some of them value the idea that they live in a community. In this paper, I explore the question of whether and how cohousing is 'different', of whether it is motivated by an aspiration to found a really different way of living and the extent to which all of this turns upon a distinctive view of property relations.

#### **1.1 Scope**

Mainly European in its origins, cohousing is increasingly an international phenomenon. Typically, researchers have identified a 'first wave' of cohousing in Nordic Europe and a 'second wave' that is emerging across North America.<sup>1</sup> Cohousing in the two waves varies in important ways, perhaps in relation to differences in culture and economic structure<sup>2</sup>. The focus of this paper is largely on the second wave – and this for three reasons. First, North American cohousing is newer and has been much less widely researched. Second, it is in North America that cohousing is growing most rapidly. Whilst cohousing is still a minority phenomenon, its recent growth in North America has been rapid. Thirdly, there are important differences in the forms of tenure associated with cohousing in the two waves. In continental Europe, cohousing communities almost always combine rented and privately owned homes and some are all-rented. This is less common in North America, where most some communities do not contain any rented homes. Some contain a few and none are all-rented. The bias in North America is towards owner-occupation. In Europe, some cohousing communities are state-financed (forming part of state social housing policy). This is not the case in the USA or Canada. My own research suggests a

significant (related) cultural-political variation, which will be explored more fully below. Briefly, European cohousing began as a utopian movement with an explicitly political purpose. In North America it is depicted by advocates and practitioners as deeply pragmatic and non-ideological. Is second-wave cohousing very different from (and less radical than) its first-wave forerunner and, if so, why?

## 1.2 Method and Sources

Academic studies of cohousing are relatively rare and tend to be based on case studies. While this paper does draw on some fieldwork (conducted as part of a different and larger study of intentional communities), it does not report any new case studies. My aim in designing this project was not to generate new knowledge of particular examples but rather to make wider (generally applicable) claims about this new form of cohousing. The main empirical base for this study comes from a comparative survey of the self-descriptions of fifty North American cohousing communities. This is outlined in section 2.3.1. Other original primary sources include original (internal and published) community documents, websites and interviews. The case studies of other researchers are also used.

I begin with a brief account of the origins of cohousing. The next stage of the paper enquires into the nature of cohousing and attempts to answer the question 'what is it?' in three ways. Firstly, a brief account of origins is offered. Secondly, the findings of key secondary research are summarised, and thirdly, the words of practitioners are offered in a progressively more detailed account of what cohousing is. The findings of my survey are also included in this section and are subsequently applied to an interrogation of the role of property in this form of cohousing. Discussion concludes with reflections on the final question: Does it offer alternatives to mainstream property relations?

## 2. What is Cohousing ?

### 2.1 *The Origins and Growth of Cohousing:*

Cohousing has its roots in mainland Europe, specifically in Denmark. Two key articles are commonly cited as inspiring this phenomenon<sup>3</sup>: journalist Bodil Graae's (1967) 'Children Should Have One Hundred Parents,' and architect Jan Gudmand-Hoyer's 1968 'The Missing Link between Utopia and the Dated One-Family House'<sup>4</sup>. The titles illustrate the tone adopted by early advocates, who were firmly utopian: dissatisfied with and critical of their present (and in particular of contemporaneous social institutions) and seeking to imagine better alternatives.<sup>5</sup> Gudmand-Hoyer and Graae articulated feminist and communitarian values and believed that cities created isolation and alienation and that urban housing played a causal role in this. They sought to restore 'disintegrating' community values, better families, and to create 'villages' in an urban context.

Since the 1970s cohousing has spread. Growth was initially gradual but expanded rapidly during the 1990s and 2000s. While growth in much of northern Europe has been steady throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, in North America it grew exponentially following the publication in 1988 (by two American architects) of *Cohousing: A contemporary approach to housing ourselves*<sup>6</sup>. In September 2009, The Federation of Intentional Communities listed 423 groups in its international directory which

identify with cohousing principles. 150 of these are in the USA and Canada. Established groups are located worldwide and national cohousing associations exist in Northern Europe<sup>7</sup> (Denmark<sup>8</sup>, Sweden<sup>9</sup> and Holland<sup>10</sup>), in North America (United States<sup>11</sup> and Canada<sup>12</sup>), in New Zealand<sup>13</sup> and in Australia<sup>14</sup>. Communities have recently been established in Spain<sup>15</sup>, France<sup>16</sup> and Italy<sup>17</sup>.

## 2.2. *What is it, according to researchers?*

Research on cohousing commonly identifies a set of core features to this form of home ownership. These vary slightly from study-to-study, but are very similar. For example, Dorit Fromm lists common facilities, private dwellings, resident-structured routines, resident management, design for social contact, resident participation in development process, and pragmatic social objectives<sup>18</sup>. And on their website, cohousing architects McCamant and Durrett name the following: 'a balance of privacy and community, a safe and supportive environment for children, a practical and spontaneous lifestyle, intergenerational neighbourhoods, environmentally-sensitive design emphasizing pedestrian access and optimizing open space, neighborhood design, and private homes supplemented by extensive common facilities'.<sup>19</sup> Martin Field identifies the following: 'designing for intentional neighbourhoods, the minimum provision of private and common facilities, size and scale to support community dynamics, and residents' control and management'.<sup>20</sup> These lists are typical and generate a picture of a form of housing arrangement that combines a number of social and physical design factors that aim to facilitate social interaction (and thus to generate better communities). Research also indicates that cohousing community members feel a strong sense of group belonging and commitment and that this form of housing generates high levels of citizenship and participation.<sup>21</sup> In other words, it seems to work, and one answer to the question 'what is it?' is that cohousing is a successful (albeit small-scale) attempt to build more interactive communities.

## 2.3 *What is it, according to practitioners?*

Modern life means neighbours often don't recognise each other and day-to-day collaboration is minimal. Research has shown that 65% of people have nobody with whom they can co-operate in their daily lives and 84% don't have close relationships with their neighbours.\* One in three people live alone, rising to 44% of older women.\*\* When people are asked what concerns them most about the area they live, they highlight crime and antisocial behaviour, dirty streets, neglected open spaces, lighting and lack of facilities for young people.\*\*\*<sup>22</sup>

This statement comes from the UK Cohousing Network's Annual Report of 2008. Typically, it depicts urban life as alienated, un-neighbourly, and making inefficient use of social resources and potential. This is the social world from which cohousing practitioners seek to escape. These broad sentiments are echoed in the public statements of the *raison d'être* of individual communities. For example:

Cohousing communities balance the traditional advantages of home ownership with the benefits of shared common facilities and ongoing connections with your neighbors. It attempts to overcome the alienation of modern subdivisions in which no one knows their neighbors, and there is no sense of community. *Sonora Cohousing Community*<sup>23</sup>

Cohousing is a way to live in community. We own our own homes and can find quiet and privacy there. But we also share many aspects of our lives - gardening, cooking, eating, celebrating and

even raising our children together. Begun in Denmark, cohousing is a remarkable way to have fuller lives, a conscious effort to break the isolation that has become the hallmark of so many American neighbourhoods. *Puget Ridge Cohousing*<sup>24</sup>

These extracts suggest a problematic of social isolation – a situation in which neighbours are unfamiliar and people have few close relationships in their immediate location. Other people who live in the district are regarded as ‘strangers’: and hence with mistrust and suspicion. Public spaces become spaces of feared or actual violence. There is seen to be little (or no) co-operation or civic responsibility and few opportunities for these to develop. There is, in short, no sense of collective belonging or ‘community’. Instead, there are atomised individual residents, fearful of one another, high profile anti-social behaviour, neglected public spaces, and disaffected youth. This, they suggest is both undesirable and unsustainable. In contrast, cohousing communities seek to offer viable alternatives and claim to ‘stand as innovative answers to today’s environmental and social problems’.<sup>25</sup>

### 2.3.1. *North American Cohousing Survey*

Background research for this paper started over ten years ago during fieldwork for two different projects (in Britain and New Zealand), in which I visited a small number of cohousing communities and gathered an impression of their aims and goals. This impression broadly matches the visions suggested in the extracts above: sharing, cooperation and neighbourliness provide a safe and diverse environment, natural resources are conserved, and relationships (with people and ‘nature’) are guided by tolerance, respect and a balance between the community and the (private) home. In order to update and to test this impression I have surveyed the self-descriptions of fifty North American cohousing communities<sup>26</sup> and the following section offers a brief summary of my findings.

Samples were selected from members of the CoHousing Association of the United States, and the selection criteria sought to include examples from each state with random selection within each state. Thirty-four of the communities were urban, eight rural and eight self-described as ‘sub-urban’.<sup>27</sup> Their size ranged from 7 to 50 households. I undertook this survey for a number of reasons. I wanted to identify and explore the stated goal of community: what is it? how is this term used? what does it mean (to these people)? I also sought to understand what, if anything, these communities have in common (for example, practices and structures?) Cohousing is often referred to as ‘a movement’ and I wanted to know whether it is legitimate to use this descriptor. Do they really have ‘shared values’? Many cohousing practitioners describe themselves as ‘non-ideological’ and/or not value-driven. Key practitioners McCamant and Durrett, for example, state that ‘Cohousing ... offers a new approach to housing rather than a new way of life. Based on democratic principles, cohousing developments espouse no ideology other than the desire for a more practical and social home environment.’<sup>28</sup> This is echoed by some of the national associations: ‘Cohousing groups are based in democratic principles that espouse no ideology other than the desire for a more practical and social home environment.’<sup>29</sup> It also occurs in individual communities: ‘We have no common creed other than a desire to live cooperatively, ecologically, and economically’ *Ten Stones CoHousing*.<sup>30</sup> Whilst I wanted to take seriously people’s claims about their own lives, I felt that this demanded some investigation: is there no coherence to this

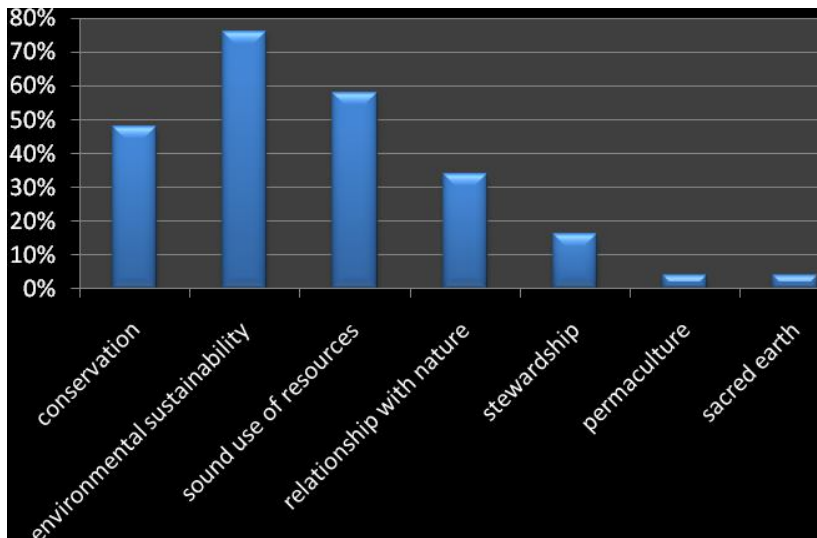
movement? Does cohousing contain no common 'creed', 'value-base' and/or 'ideology'? Isn't democracy an ideology, for example?

The survey involved a simple form of content analysis, beginning with a close reading of the self-descriptions by each of the fifty groups on the national association website<sup>31</sup>. These are all authored by a member of the community in question (i.e. not by a member of the association's staff). Some sections of these webpages are unstructured (free-form narratives) and some are structured around subheadings provided by the association (on a *pro forma*). The latter are useful for comparability (for example, each group is asked to provide information on a number of factual areas such as labour expectations - is a labour commitment part of membership? - decision-making procedures, and form of ownership).<sup>32</sup> In this exercise, a value of 1 was entered if a term was mentioned in either of these sections<sup>33</sup> and the findings below are not weighted.<sup>34</sup> A second stage of analysis involved visits to the individual community websites, where the same exercise was repeated (with no double-entering if the term was used twice). So the charts below tell us if the terms are used in North American cohousing community self descriptions: nothing more, nothing less. This is, as noted above, a simple method of analysis but it does yield some interesting results, which are supplemented below by discussions from qualitative readings of these texts.

### 2.3.2 Survey findings:

My findings for both of these sets of enquiry are linked. The survey did reveal significant cohesion, showing a set of common structures and highly-valued behaviours and attitudes. These form part of a shared conception of community.

The first significant set of findings identified key terms within statements about the natural environment. 'The environment' was mentioned in all cases and a concern for the environment is clearly a feature of cohousing in North America. Jo Williams notes this as a distinguishing factor between cohousing in the USA and cohousing in Europe: 'The US cohousing model evolved from the northern European model and adopted a diversity of development [and procurement] approaches ... ; it adopted a more environmental focus and led to the emergence of a cohousing movement.'<sup>35</sup> An interesting set of results from the survey concerns the kind of sentiments expressed about nature. The table below illustrates this, showing the different ways in which the term was employed:



*Table 1: The Natural Environment*

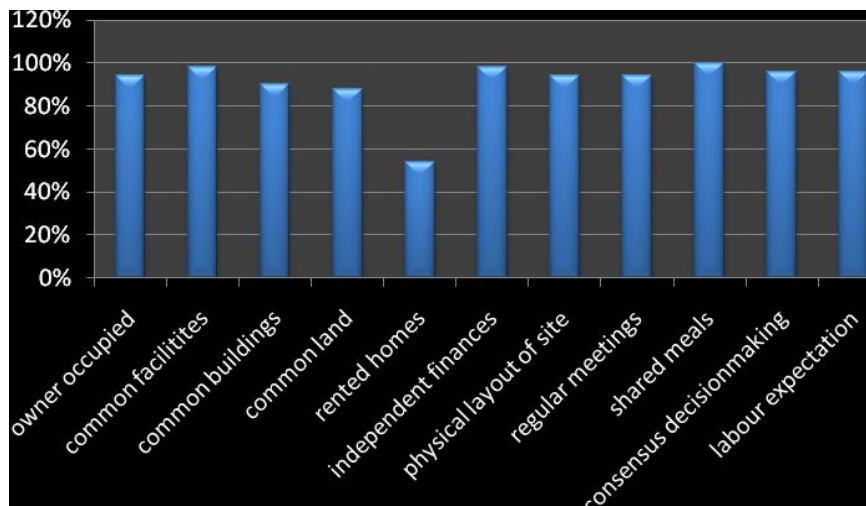
There is, I suggest, a significant pattern in the ways in which environmental concerns were couched: 'conservation', 'sustainability' and 'use of resources' all suggest pragmatic, practical concerns for the environment. Very few cases referred to a spiritual connection with the earth, although 34% sought to develop a stronger 'relationship' with nature. In theoretical terms, this suggests a concern with 'shallow' or 'light green' environmentalism, rather than 'dark green', 'deep' (or spiritual) ecology<sup>36</sup>. In most cases<sup>37</sup>, these groups purchase a piece of land, build homes on it that are designed to be low-impact and energy and resource efficient. Members live on this land, attain knowledge of it, gain awareness of their impact upon it (for example through run-off water and sewage disposal), often grow food, and generally attain a familiar relationship with a (small) slice of the natural world outside their own front doors. For example,

In Shadowlake Village, our common areas include the common house, two large community gardens, a central area we call the "Green", a gazebo, playground, pathways, and the parts of our 33 acres that will never be developed, such as the woods and lower meadows. Part of the hillside meadows is being re-naturalized with native trees and wildflowers so we can pay back some of the debt we owe to Mother Nature for having developed this beautiful ridgetop. Other open spaces include a small entry park, areas to camp and picnic, an informal ball field, and a fire pit for occasional bonfires.

Our homes are clustered on a small portion of our site to preserve several acres of green space and 17 acres of mature woods, which include well-tended trails. The wood is an important part of our common space. It has wildflowers, footpaths, and mature stands of poplar, oak, maple, cherry, hickory, and ash trees, and offers cool sanctuary in hot weather and enchanting views in winter snow. We are fortunate that our wooded acreage is directly adjacent to the 169-acre Brown Farm that was purchased by the Town of Blacksburg in 2000 and is now called Heritage Park. Shadow Lake Village<sup>38</sup>

In 44 of the 50 cases the community owned some land collectively (the extent of this varied from a small garden to acres of wood or pasture). In most cases, the shared land forms a large part of the 'good life' described in this community. It is depicted as a collective resource, a beautiful place to come home to and a safe space for children: the land thus forms part of the shared facilities of the community. It is also something for which members share responsibility. A few groups describe the relationship with their land in terms of stewardship, stressing collective responsibility for it, while others refer to it more in terms of leisure. Most suggest that the common land enhances their quality of life. This all suggests an approach to nature which seeks through collective ownership, responsibility and use, to reduce human impact, conserve resources and benefit the land, the individual and the collective.

A second set of findings concerned common structural features which facilitate the desired community dynamic.



*Table 2: Common Structural Features of Cohousing Communities*

Almost all the groups in the sample share some commonly-owned facilities and most own some land collectively (above) plus at least one common building. And most describe their physical site, which is intentionally designed to facilitate social interaction. There are two significant aspects to this: firstly the design process itself and secondly the physical outcomes of that process. Members of cohousing communities almost always participate in the actual design of the physical layout of their community. In interview, members describe this as both daunting and empowering. New-build groups usually employ specialist architects and often delegate someone (often a member) to manage the site during construction, but all members participate actively in the design process: over a series of months (and sometimes years) they visit and select sites, plan the layout and choose building materials. Examples of this process in action can be found via the UK CoHousing Association website, where some groups in the development stage provide short films and reflections on their development process.<sup>39</sup>



The design itself is hugely consequential and shapes a large part of the cohousing experience. This includes factors such as the layout of roads, paths and outdoor space (gardens, orchards, play areas); location of parking areas, homes, community buildings and other premises; and construction of the actual buildings (materials such as wood, straw-bale, rammed earth or brick), layout (how many storeys? how many rooms per home? which rooms are oriented in which direction?), and heating (such as passive solar, solar panel, or thermal ground source). All have an impact: 'Residents have many opportunities to meet one another while they're getting their mail at the common house, strolling on the pedestrian walkway on which the houses all front, playing outdoors with their kids or their dogs, or walking to their cars. Because the center of the community is a pedestrian area, kids have a safe place to play away from cars.' *Shadowlake Cohousing*.<sup>40</sup> Physical and social community building processes are discussed further in section 3.

Other significant structural features are economic and social. None of these groups are income-sharing rather; members retain independent finances.<sup>41</sup> And all groups in the sample mentioned some features of intentional social design for 'community'. These include social diversity (selecting members to achieve mixed generations, single-couple-family groups, ethnic and/or racial groups), shared meals, regular meetings and a 'labour commitment'. More space is devoted to shared meals on these websites than to any other component except physical space. It is easy to underestimate the importance of shared meals but residents stress their importance for relationship building. The labour commitment is a contractual undertaking to provide unpaid work for the group. The nature of this commitment varies from group to group. It includes such things as contributing to monthly work days, preparing community meals (by rota), attending business meetings, and conducting routine maintenance on land or buildings. Most groups specify a minimum time commitment per month and this forms part of the community agreements, signed upon taking up residency. These topics are all discussed further in sections 3 and 4 below.

A third set of findings identify highly valued behaviours and attitudes within the sample:

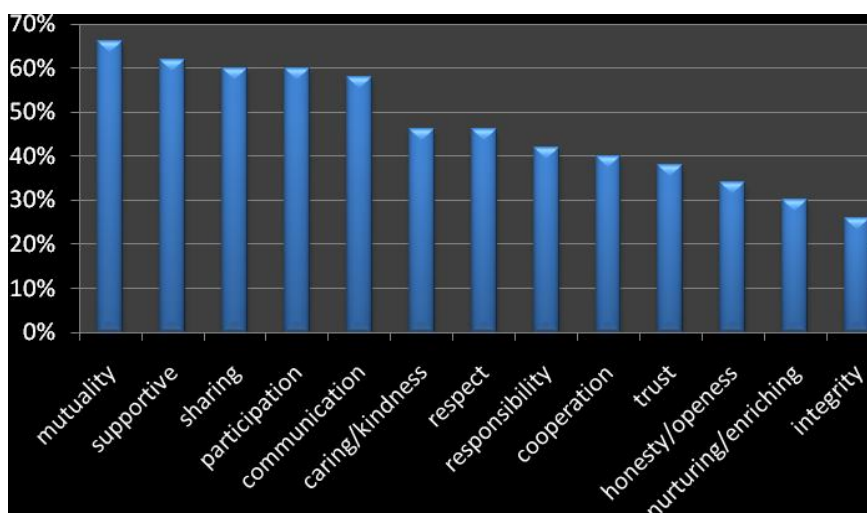
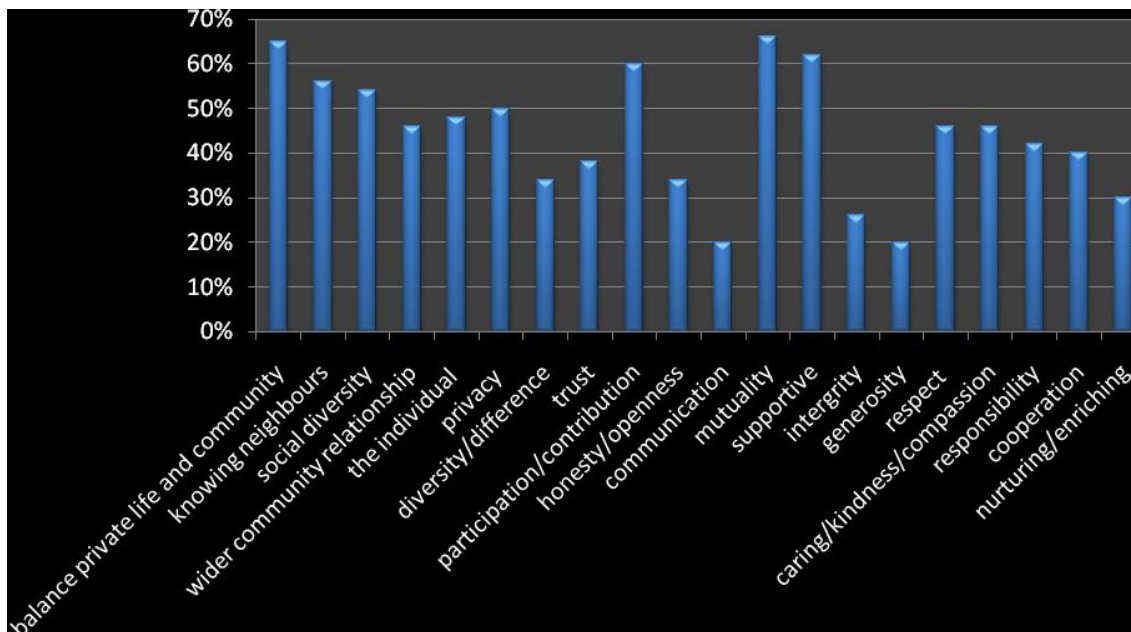


Table 3: Values, Behaviours and Attitudes

Some of these terms require clarification. 'Sharing' refers to the use of resources, facilities, space, time, energy and activities. For example: 'We share goods and resources, such as tools, transportation, child care, community-supported agriculture, and common meals.'<sup>42</sup> 'Participation' is *both* factored into membership (via residency agreements, as noted above) *and* identified as a key to community success. And 'mutuality' is connected to the insistence by 65% of the sample upon a balance between privacy and community and the mention in 48% of cases of 'the individual'. It is important that the 'giving' aspects of life in a community should be reciprocal, that the active participant in these communities should be able to retreat into an *interrupted*??? private space and that nurture should apply to both the individual and the collective.

So, what do the values of North American cohousing look like? The survey suggests that it looks like this:



My own fieldwork in Britain and New Zealand suggests that the combination of physical and social design for community does produce communities in which people feel safer, more supported, collectively responsible and engaged with their local (social and natural) environments. However, this fieldwork concerned a very small number of cases. There is very little independent<sup>43</sup> academic evaluative research on cohousing against which to test this, but what does exist supports these observations. For example, in 2007, Lisa Poley and Max Stephenson reported to the APSA annual conference and investigation of civic engagement, social capital and democratic capacity building in North American cohousing groups. Drawing on a large *n* national benchmark survey of civic engagement<sup>44</sup>, this project concluded that members of cohousing groups substantially 'exceeded the national average' in civic participation<sup>45</sup> within and beyond their immediate community. The large survey was supplemented by fieldwork in three case studies and reported 'increased social interaction

and cohesion, increased feelings of trust toward neighbours and high levels of support and reciprocity at the level of neighbourhood as a result of living in a cohousing development'.<sup>46</sup> This suggests that cohousing communities achieve at least some of their aims.

### **3. What is the role of property in cohousing?**

At least one way of thinking about what makes cohousing different is that it has a distinctive attitude to property. In this section of the paper I want to tease out, reiterate and unravel some significant points at which property plays a role in this cohousing story. Property is about relationships: about rights held over things, places (and people), and about the ways in which we hold or 'own' things. It occurs in the context of wider power relationships - for example, between the owner and the owned, between individual owners and between owner/s and the state. And property establishes and maintains relationships of power, for example over things and between people who do and do not own things (these are relations of inequality and uneven influence; class, capital, and labour). Here I will be using the term loosely, to include ideas about and practices of ownership, relationships between people and things, and relationships amongst people which are formed or influenced by ownership.

Property clearly forms part of the cohousing critique of society as well as part of its vision of a better life. Cohousing groups seek to escape alienated, isolated and disconnected social life in the city. There is something about urban (and suburban) life which produces dysfunctional communities. Part of the problem is that property is owned, organised and distributed amongst local populations in ways that create social isolation: 'We believe that today's neighborhoods have in large part served to isolate people from one another and encourage alienation from ourselves and our communities.'<sup>47</sup> Living in separate units amongst streets and public spaces which are perceived to be unsafe encourages people to stay indoors, use private cars as much as possible and minimize interaction with unknown people. Free public spaces (such as parks and playgrounds) feel threatening and the indoor 'public' space is often privatized and connected to commercial activity (in the form of shopping centres and malls). It would be peculiar, to initiate conversations with unknown people in these places. As a consequence we retreat into our cocooned private spaces and do not know our neighbours. They are strangers with whom we share no common ground.

Private individual ownership then, is part of the problem because it helps to encourage a particular kind of urban relationship. The layout of physical space is another part of the problem and it is no accident that many of the key voices in the history of cohousing have been architects. Collective ownership is part of the cohousing recipe for improved communities. This is said to have a number of functions, which will be discussed below. Briefly, it permits a group intentionally to design a neighbourhood (in such a way as to facilitate rather than inhibit positive and regular social interactions), it creates collective 'ownership' of the plan for this community, it creates collective responsibility for common space, it both demands and generates cooperation (or co-governance) within the group and this has beneficial educative functions for individual members as well as facilitating a group identity as a community. Attitudes and behaviours identified in the survey above as valuable are developed in these

processes. I propose to discuss collective ownership under the headings physical space and social design.

### *3.1 Collective Ownership and Physical Space*

The ownership of land affords owners access to the right to develop and shape it. This is not a free licence or unbounded right and is restricted by national and local property rules. However, it does afford a certain freedom. This applies to all owners and not just collective ones, of course, but it has special significance in the collective context because cohousing architects insist that the client group needs to be part of the process of planning. The collective ownership of land, then, permits the group intentionally to shape and develop it. The layout of space deliberately facilitates community and this is even more meaningful if the group has co-designed the project. Cohousing advocates emphasize the need actively to participate in community at all levels and this includes its design. The efficacy and impact of architectural design are the most-commonly studied aspect of this phenomenon<sup>48</sup> and it is an important part of the cohousing success story. I cannot discuss this fully here because cohousing architecture is a vast topic: meticulous, detailed, and complex, but I will note a few points by way of illustration. New-build cohousing communities share certain physical and architectural features and traits: homes are often clustered around common spaces, for example, in such a way that all have visual access to it from their homes. This permits everyone the pleasure of seeing one's open space (garden, orchard, or 'village green') and also permits casual surveillance of this space by all neighbours. Domestic units (houses and flats) tend to be smaller in cohousing settlements. Firstly, there is a greater proportion of common (outdoor and indoor) space in these communities than in other housing projects (they often share an additional building, for example) and so the argument is that household need less private space here. Secondly, the fact of having less private space encourages residents to make use of common areas. Pedestrian areas and paths (lines of desire) lead residents past each other's homes, or homes are arranged either side of wide walkways. The idea is that people will walk to and from the parking areas and meet each other along the way. These are just three examples of design features that facilitate 'community' in cohousing units, manipulating human behaviour via the organisation of collectively owned space. Of course, architects could (and do) attempt this without collective ownership (and actually many of the principles of second wave cohousing architectural design reflect the practices of New Urbanism, a mainstream commercial architectural approach which seeks to facilitate community<sup>49</sup>), but the fact that this land is owned by the group and also that the first generation of residents have participated in the design is thought to reinforce residents' awareness and use of their physical space. – Owning the site together gives members collective rights to shape and organise its layout and they do so together, in such a way that will eventually shape their own behaviour.



Site Design: EarthSong Cohousing Community, New Zealand

In addition to collectively owning the site, cohousing schemes always involve *some* communal spaces over which all members have rights of use and access. These provide literal and figurative common ground to each group: forming a focus for collective activity, energy, commitment and communication. The communal space varies according to the affluence, size, needs and nature of each group but examples include a flat, house or apartment; a garden, fields, or paddock; laundry, kitchen and/or dining and living rooms; teenage crash pads, music facilities and/or workshops; swimming pool, tennis courts and/or children's playground. Collective ownership of these spaces both forces and permits increased contact within the neighbourhood.<sup>50</sup> Close to the heart of the co-housing vision of a good life, then, is the idea that sharing ownership and use (of some form of) space with one's neighbours produces a positive social dynamic, positive material outcomes (ie shared access to good facilities), and individual and collective wellbeing. Urban planner Jo Williams's (2005) observations of two cases in California revealed regular formal and informal interactions in common spaces and suggested that these are a key factor in the success of this model<sup>51</sup>. Shared ownership of a semi-public space (ie public within the community) constitutes a 'common wealth', a social resource and a social good. This has a number of tangible outcomes including increased communication and interaction with neighbours.

### 3.2 Collective Ownership and Social Design

Physical design for community is reinforced by social design. This has a number of components and includes community agreements and codes about appropriate behaviour, activities and processes, each of which is designed to facilitate 'a better community'. As with architectural design of physical space, social design is a large topic: complex and varied and I will consider just a selection of illustrative examples. These are decision making and conflict resolution, work commitment, and collective activities.

The importance of collective decision making was mentioned above, in the discussion of designed physical space. This space is collectively governed and managed and in functional groups this involves rules and codes of conduct and process. In order to co-govern, members need to learn to discuss, decide and act together. Most groups (94% of the survey) note the importance of community meetings and most second wave communities favour consensus decision-making. Consensus decision making requires time, patience, skill and will and is particularly challenging in this context because it occurs within what, for many members, is a new property relationship. For many members, this is their first experience of shared ownership and thus of collective responsibility and decision taking over something they own. Members face a double challenge then: a new property relationship with other people and the need (or desire) to make decisions by consensus. Robust social design and processes are thus vital for successful cohousing experiments and they are often mentioned in community mission statements:

Our vision statement:

- Design and construct a cohesive neighbourhood whose layout, buildings and services demonstrate the highest practical standards of sustainable human settlement
- *Develop and foster a living environment which uses clear communication, decision-making and conflict resolution guidelines that promote tolerance, safety, respect and co-operation*
- Assist in education and public awareness of sustainability by demonstrating and promoting innovative community design and environmentally responsible construction.<sup>52</sup>

This community, in New Zealand, was under construction when I visited in 2000 and all 32 homes are now occupied. At that time, the group had been planning the community for eight years and long before the buildings were complete they had developed clear procedures and processes for induction (a 'buddy', or mentoring system), meeting protocols<sup>53</sup> and conflict resolution agreements.

Collective ownership and use affords increased familiarity and contact with one's neighbours. However, it also yields conflict and dispute and it is important to note this<sup>54</sup>. In practice, when land and buildings are collectively owned, the opportunities for neighbourhood disputes are unlimited<sup>55</sup>. Cohousing practitioners acknowledge this and conflict resolution is an important part of cohousing social design.

Membership of a cohousing community involves a commitment to labour or work for the group. This is common to both first and second wave cohousing. It was mentioned in 98% of the survey sample and occurs across all of the older European communities: members are expected to work for the group. This is a formal and contractual undertaking and forms part of the tenancy, ownership contract, which normally specifies a number of hours expected from each adult member per month. The nature of work varies, as discussed above, and examples include babysitting, preparing a community meal, gardening, book-keeping, taking older members shopping, dealing with visitor enquiries and building maintenance. The significance of this labour commitment to our property story is that work is divorced from income or financial return. In conventional property regimes, most people work for income and most work is conducted in return for income. There are exceptions, of course, and cohousing practices belong within

a tradition of voluntary service to the community. This is service freely given to the community and cast in terms of the greater good. Members of cohousing communities contract with each other to provide unremunerated service for each other. This is a universal commitment: all members undertake it and it is thus reciprocal. The cohousing labour expectation is a key to the success of these community experiments. In interview, members often spoke about the satisfaction of working together, the social benefits and also (with some surprise) of the relationship between input and return: (for example, one individual spoke of contributing a just few hours a month but receiving a disproportionate return of twice-weekly meals in the common house, a weekly supply of fresh produce from the gardens and their children is collected from school each day).

Collective activities are the occasions at which these social design processes are practiced. These activities include regular formal and structured occasions, such as meetings: whole-group meetings or subcommittees, which operate according to the rules and codes of conduct mentioned above. Meetings are the occasions on which members get to exercise co-governance over collectively owned spaces: using, maintaining and managing them together. Other important collective activities include regular, structured informal occasions such as community meals, often mentioned in interview and in the survey as the key to the social glue of the group (see above, section2). Meals allow residents to come to know each other outside of the formal context of meetings and this is often stressed as very important. There is a connection here between familiarity and trust: participants claim that informal interactions permit familiarity, neighbours become known, their 'otherness' is diminished and this builds trust. These regular social occasions form the skeleton on which community cohesion is built.

The following extract is a typical expression of the aims of social design in cohousing communities:

Our vision is to create and sustain an urban community for 27 households in the Jackson Place neighborhood of Seattle. Our goal is to create an environment that nourishes a vibrant, meaningful life for every member, "providing individuals and families with what they need from a private point of view while allowing them to get what they want from a community point of view." ... As the residents, we are the designers, developers, and caretakers of our community. Community work is shared by all residents, and we gather in regular meetings to shape our direction and growth. We are committed to a consensus decision-making process. We strive to create an atmosphere of cooperation and goodwill where everyone is willing to lend a helping hand. We choose to develop relationships with each other based on mutual respect, trust, and honest communication. We agree to explore and to resolve, to the best of our ability, the inevitable conflicts and misunderstandings that occur between people living in community.<sup>56</sup>

According to the cohousing narrative, then, private, individual ownership separates us from our neighbours and makes us fear them, while private, collective ownership (a defining feature of cohousing) entails shared responsibility, forces us to communicate with our neighbours, and allows people to acquire social skills and competencies, including the ability to resolve conflicts. Highly valued behaviours identified in the survey (like trust, openness, respect, cooperation and integrity) are nurtured through participation in co-governance, as are responsibility, mutuality and communication. As with practical design, a circular process occurs in which the group intentionally establishes design

factors that will shape their own behaviour. The outcomes of social design in cohousing are varied but extant research supports the idea that they are positive: generating more civic participation, civic education, and a sense of personal efficacy as well as community belonging<sup>57</sup>.

#### **4. Does it offer alternatives to mainstream property relationships?**

Discussion in section 3 focused on the role of property in the cohousing narrative and experience and stressed ways in which these groups seek to change and adapt property relations through the collective ownership and use of space and land. Particular attention was paid to the desire to create better relationships within communities and this concerned relationships between the owners of these properties. I propose now to sharpen the critical focus of discussion and to ask whether these 'new' relationships are really alternative to those in wider society. Discussion will be structured through consideration of relationships between the owner and the owned and between owners and the state.

##### *4.1 Relationships between the owner and owned*

The first thing to note about second-wave cohousing is that on the most central question of property – on the relationship between owners and land – it is deeply conventional. Even that which is collectively owned is privately owned. In section 2.3.2 above, I identified a common attitude to nature and the environment in the North American survey. This, I suggested, was not a deeply spiritual or darkly green ecological view, such as that articulated by Arne Naess ('father' of deep ecology)<sup>58</sup>. It was not a view of nature in which self and other meld into an ecological whole, not a view in which the self is viewed ontologically derived from nature. This view is present in some cohousing groups but it is exceptional. In other research I have identified this paradigm inside some older intentional communities which self-identify as 'green' and 'spiritual' (including some communes and New Age communities dating back to the 1970s)<sup>59</sup>. In this view, the relationship between self and land is shifted and transformed and 'ownership' takes on a different meaning. In cohousing, however, the view is more conventional: land is a possession (albeit a collective one), it is owned and can therefore be used, changed and developed according to human needs. However, attention is paid to position and location and cohousing architects tend to develop land sympathetically, (with minimized structural change to the existing plot, fitting houses, pathways into the site rather than regarding it as a blank space to be bulldozed and developed from scratch). If we can imagine attitudes to land ownership and attitudes to the environment as informing a spectrum of views, deep ecology and ecological-spiritual communes would sit at one end, where land and human self are in deep intimacy, private (capitalist) individual mainstream ownership would sit at the other, where human individuals have ownership and mastery of land, and cohousing would lie somewhere between the two, in a place where groups of individuals collectively own land, have rights over it and develop it sympathetically for anthropocentric ends (seeking to low impact and maximisation of natural features (angles of sun, light, water drainage).

##### *4.2 Relationships between owners and the state.*



On the question of the relationship between owners and the state, second-wave cohousing is conventional in two important senses: firstly regarding tenure and ownership and secondly in terms of ideology.

### *Tenure and Ownership*

All cohousing groups involve some collective ownership of property, but they do not seek an end to private ownership. Nor do they seek to end individual ownership. I shall discuss these in turn. The narratives offered by advocates and practitioners of 'second wave' cohousing are not transgressive of the idea of conventional and private legal ownership of land and buildings. There are a number of reasons for this. I noted at the beginning of this paper that one factor that distinguished first from second wave (or North American/New Zealand/British from mainland (Nordic) European) cohousing is the fact that the state funds projects in Denmark, Sweden and Holland. In North America this does not happen. A second was the proportion of rented homes, relative to owner-occupied. These are related and make a significant difference to the cultures of first and second wave cohousing. The fact that Nordic states sees cohousing as a solution to social housing means that some communities are entirely state owned and also that more rental spaces are available. State-subsidised cohousing is thus accessible to low income groups. This is not the case in the USA. Furthermore, private funding bodies are more likely in Europe to lend money for limited equity or shared ownership projects. In the States, this is possible, but less common and certainly not the norm. Things are changing and indeed, in 1991 when Dorit Fromm wrote *Collaborative Communities* (an inspiration for many cohousers) it seemed impossible. Having searched the United States (unsuccessfully) for collaborative housing groups that corresponded to the cohousing communities of Denmark, Sweden and Holland, she concludes 'Financing has become the critical problem in the production of collaborative housing in the United States.'<sup>60</sup> Renting is more common in Europe than in the lands of the second wave: the American dream involves home ownership and so, post-1980s, does the British one. Assuming they can raise the money to buy-in to a group, prospective members of cohousing communities want secure legal tenure over their homes. The socio-economic profile and aspirations of second-wave cohousing members is different from that of squatters or early communards of the sixties and even of some first wavers. Most retain paid (and often professional) employment (the survey revealed the employment areas: computer programmers, artists, teachers, university professors/lecturers, therapists, caregivers, scientists, construction workers, dancers, homemakers, engineers, writers, entrepreneurs, musicians, administrators, fitness trainers, chefs, landscapers, IT people, counselors, retirees, farmers, cooks and conservationists). These people have accumulated capital which they will invest in the community. Most of the newer cohousing communities (even those with significant proportions of rental accommodation) require private individuals to buy-in to the community: to invest and purchase land and homes. Membership involves financial investment and legal tenure provides (some) security of investment.

Secondly, legal tenure affords certain freedoms. Of course, this varies from country to country but common models include the condominium structure (in the USA), combined freehold and leasehold (in the UK) and also housing co-operative structures. The rights associated with freehold ownership, for example, permit the group to form a management board and establish 'collective freehold', selling

homes on lease: 'Holding the freehold title in its own right would mean that the group should be able to determine how it plans to use the site or overall property without undue deference to others. Releasing units only on a leasehold basis would allow the community to put requirements or covenants within the terms of the lease that are designed to strengthen the community setting.'<sup>61</sup>The same point applies to the condominium ownership structure in the USA: collective ownership permits the writing of community rules (social design for community) into individual leases *and*, importantly, it affords an opportunity for physical design for community. Both are important aspects of cohousing, as discussed above. Such rules have historically protected either flat owners (against other inhabitants within the block) or the interests of the landlord. Here, they are used for something different.<sup>62</sup>

Cohousing groups do not seek to break existing rules of property ownership, rather, they adapt them to their own ends, which are not, strictly speaking, radical. They are, I suggest, significant and noteworthy, but they do not seek to overthrow private property, reclaim the commons, or rid the world of money (and there is, of course, no reason to think that they would).<sup>63</sup> They do not challenge the state's authority or right to write property rules. Instead, they seek secure tenure over a space in which they can design and develop better communities.

### *Ideology*

I noted above that cohousing groups and advocates of second wave cohousing often claim to be value-free and non-ideological. My research questions this. There is certainly a core of shared values to this cohousing movement. It is environmentally conscious (in the 'shallow' conservationist sense), it seeks a vision of community which involves respect for diversity, personal integrity, responsibility, and honesty. It also favours cooperation, sharing and participation (including the gift of labour to the community). And it seeks to protect, support and nurture individuals, who form part of a collective. This is never couched in doctrinal terms but always presented as pragmatic, sensible and having positive outcomes for all. I think it probably could be termed ideological, in some senses of this term. Nonetheless, the important point here is the continued and repeated *claim to be non-ideological*. It is, I think, connected to the non- and anti-radical nature of second wave cohousing. And this explains why advocates seek to distance cohousing from utopian experiments, from other forms of intentional community, and from radical social movements:

Cohousing groups are based in democratic principles that espouse no ideology other than the desire for a more practical and social home environment.<sup>64</sup>

Cohousing also differs from intentional communities and communes. Communes are often organized around strong ideological beliefs. Most intentional communities function as educational or spiritual centers. Cohousing, on the other hand, offers a new approach to housing rather than a new way of life. Based on democratic principles, cohousing developments espouse no ideology other than the desire for a more practical and social home environment.<sup>65</sup>

Cohousing is a popular movement: people like it and more people are trying it every year. New groups appear on the websites of cohousing national associations each month and the conversion rate from 'aspired' to 'realised' community has increased.

Cohousing has proved more popular than collective housing or intentional communities largely because cohousing communities reject the idea of having set ideologies...<sup>66</sup>

Cohousing has learned from previous intentional communities that communal ownership is difficult to manage, of marginal appeal and unpopular with funders. Fully communal living, always a minority activity, has moved even further to the margins in the 2000s. It is simply, unpopular. I do not want to overstate the significance of cohousing; it is a minority movement, but it is growing. In part, this is because mainstream funders and planners have started to support it. It is possible to gain funding from 'highstreet' lenders for cohousing developments and named funders in the survey (discussed above) included the National Bank of Arizona, Evergreen Bank, Exchange Bank, Wells Fargo, Luther Burbank, and Horizon Bank.

This may be the key to the question: 'does it offer a real alternative?' Cohousing does offer something different, popular and viable, but it is not rooted in a radical property alternative. Cohousing offers a model that makes use of existing property rules to shape space and influence human behaviour in such a way as to develop better communities. The older European version articulated communitarian values and was located within wider utopian projects. Second wave cohousing is different: both value-driven and anti-ideological, it is widely transferrable, explicitly (dogmatically) pragmatic and it provides a malleable framework, accessible to social conservatives as well as radicals. It identifies property relations as part of the problem and part of the solution but it does not constitute a radical property alternative.

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<sup>1</sup> Some identify a 'third wave' around the Pacific Rim, Australia and South East Asia, but very little research exists on the latter. See Williams, J. (2005) 'Designing Neighbourhoods for Social Interaction: the case of cohousing' in *Journal of Urban Design* Vol 10, No2, 195-227.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Fromm, D. (1991) *Collaborative Communities: cohousing central living and other forms of housing with shared facilities* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold), McCamant, K. & Durrett, C. (2003) *Cohousing: a contemporary approach to housing ourselves* (Berkeley California, Ten Speed Press).

<sup>3</sup> For example, 'The articles by Gudmand-Hoyer and Graee were the seeds of inspiration for many Danish cohousers.' K McCamant and C Durrett *Cohousing a contemporary approach to housing ourselves* (Berkeley, CA, Ten Speed Press, 1994, p136)

<sup>4</sup> Written following an unsuccessful attempt to create a collective housing community: working with a group of friends, Gudmand-Hoyer purchased land and planned a housing development at Hareskov, outside Copenhagen, in 1964. This was short-lived (owing to local opposition), but the account of these experiences is widely cited as the inspiration for cohousing, including the first cohousing communities, Saettedammen and Skraplanet (1972/3)

<sup>5</sup> The meaning of the term 'utopian' is much debated within specialist circles and disputes exist regarding the form, content and functions of this concept. Key texts in these debates include Suvin 1972, 1973, Kumar 1991, Sargent 1967, 1994, Levitas 1990 and Moylan 1986. Two key components endure throughout these conflicting debates of definition: utopias criticise their present and seek a better alternative.

<sup>6</sup> McCamant, K. and Durrett, C. (1988) *Cohousing: a contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves* (Berkeley, CA Ten Speed Press). For example, of 95 communities in the USA in 2009, 33 were completed during the 1990s and 59 during the 2000s <http://www.cohousing.org/directory>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.cohousing.co.uk>

<sup>8</sup> Approximately 1% of the Danish population live in cohousing (roughly 50,000 people.) <http://www.xn--bofllesskab-c9a.dk/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.kollektivhus.nu/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.lvcw.nl/>

<sup>11</sup> The Cohousing Association of the United States listed 95 completed communities in 2009 and roughly three times as many in the forming or building stages <http://www.cohousing.org/directory>

<sup>12</sup> The Canadian Housing Network listed 9 completed communities in 2009 <http://www.cohousing.ca/summary.htm>

- <sup>13</sup> <http://www.converge.org.nz/evcnz/>
- <sup>14</sup> <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~cohouse/>
- <sup>15</sup> <http://www.milagrocohousing.org/home.html>
- <sup>16</sup> <http://www.habitatgroupe.org/>
- <sup>17</sup> <http://cohousing.it/>
- <sup>18</sup> Fromm, D. (1991) pp7-8.
- <sup>19</sup> McCamant and Durrett Architects <http://www.mccamant-durrett.com/characteristics.cfm>
- <sup>20</sup> Field, M. (2004) *Thinking About Cohousing: the creation of intentional neighbourhoods* (London: Edge of Time), p10.
- <sup>21</sup> This finding is common to practitioner, advocate and independent academic research. See, for example, The UK Cohousing Association <http://www.cohousing.org>, Meltzer, G. (2005) *Sustainable Community, learning from the cohousing model* (Victoria, BC: Trafford), Field, M. (2004) *Thinking About Cohousing: the creation of intentional neighbourhoods* (London: Edge of Time), and Poley, L. & Stephenson, M. 'Community and the Habits of Democratic Citizenship: An Investigation into Civic Engagement, Social Capital and Democratic Capacity-Building in U.S. Cohousing Neighborhoods' Paper prepared for the 103rd annual meeting of the American Political Science Association. Chicago, Illinois August 30 – September 2, 2007.
- <sup>22</sup> UK Cohousing Network 2008 Report , p3. Internal references: \* National Lifestyle Preferences. 2006; \*\*General Household Survey 2005, and \*\*\*New Economics Foundation 2008.
- <sup>23</sup> Sonora Cohousing, Tuscan Arizona [http://sonoracoho.com/about\\_us](http://sonoracoho.com/about_us)
- <sup>24</sup> Puget Ridge Cohousing, Seattle Washington <http://www.pugetridge.net/>
- <sup>25</sup> <http://www.cohousing.org/> accessed 28.01.10
- <sup>26</sup> I wanted to gather evidence from a broader base than was possible in field-visits.
- <sup>27</sup> In English terminology these are best described as 'semi-rural'.
- <sup>28</sup> The full statement raises points to which I shall return later. It runs thus 'Cohousing also differs from intentional communities and communes. Communes are often organized around strong ideological beliefs. Most intentional communities function as educational or spiritual centers. Cohousing, on the other hand, offers a new approach to housing rather than a new way of life. Based on democratic principles, cohousing developments espouse no ideology other than the desire for a more practical and social home environment' *Kathryn McCamant & Charles Durrett 'Cohousing Communities Sustaining Ourselves, Sustaining Our Communities'* <http://www.ecovisionquest.com/cohousing.htm> accessed 29.01.10
- <sup>29</sup> 'What is CoHousing? Canadian CoHousing Network <http://www.cohousing.ca/whatis.htm>
- <sup>30</sup> Ten Stones Cohousing, Vermont <http://tenstones.info/>.
- <sup>31</sup> <http://www.cohousing.org/>
- <sup>32</sup> And the former are suggestive of the internal culture of each group: what do they choose to include in these open sections? Which aspects are given priority? For example, some groups open with value statements, while others begin with a description of their physical space.
- <sup>33</sup> No double counting: for example two mentions did not get an entry of 2.
- <sup>34</sup> I have not weighted the findings according to importance given with the self-descriptions because although this can be useful, it can cause distortions.
- <sup>35</sup> William, J (2005) p202.
- <sup>36</sup> Scholars of green political thought sometimes identify two broad types of green politics. The terms used to describe these vary, for example, Jonathan Porritt refers to shades of the same colour: light and dark green (Porritt, J. (1984) *Seeing Green* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell)) and Andrew Dobson prefers the terms environmentalist and ecologist (Dobson, A. (1995) *Green Political Thought* (London Routledge)). The split was originally noted by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in his 1973 essay 'The Shallow and the Deep: long-range ecology movement' in *Inquiry*, 16.
- <sup>37</sup> There are exceptions: some communities are not developed from scratch but 'retrofit' existing buildings.
- <sup>38</sup> Shadow Lake Village, Virginia [http://www.shadowlakevillage.org/SLVweb/About\\_SLV.html](http://www.shadowlakevillage.org/SLVweb/About_SLV.html)
- <sup>39</sup> See, for example, Lancaster Cohousing at <http://www.cohousing.org.uk/lancaster-cohousing> and <http://www.lancastercohousing.org.uk/> or LILAC (Leeds) at <http://www.cohousing.org.uk/lilac> or <http://www.lilac.coop/>.
- <sup>40</sup> Shadow Lake Village, Virginia [http://www.shadowlakevillage.org/SLVweb/About\\_SLV.html](http://www.shadowlakevillage.org/SLVweb/About_SLV.html)
- <sup>41</sup> This is consistent with cohousing's distancing from other, older forms of collective living experiments and has occurred in interview as something to be avoided because it requires too much commitment from people, is difficult to sustain across time and causes intragroup conflict.
- <sup>42</sup> Jackson Place CoHousing, Seattle <http://www.seattlecohousing.org/Vision.html>
- <sup>43</sup> ie, non-advocate and/or practitioner.
- <sup>44</sup> Saguaro Seminar 'Social Capital National Benchmark Survey', Harvard University 2000-2006. See Poley and Stephenson 2007 and <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/saguaro/measurement/measurement.htm>.
- <sup>45</sup> Proxy measures for this were: volunteered time, work on a community project, service as officer or committee member of a local organisation, attendance at public meetings, donations to charity, blood donation, registration to vote, claim to be interested in national affairs, and attendance of a rally or protest. Poley and Stephenson, 2007, p15. See also Williams, 2005.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid, p16
- <sup>47</sup> Sonora Cohousing, Tuscan Arizona [http://sonoracoho.com/community\\_vision](http://sonoracoho.com/community_vision)
- <sup>48</sup> See for example, McCamant and Durrett (2003), Williams (2005), Cooper, Marcus & Sarkissan (1986) *Housing as if people mattered: site design for medium density family housing* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press) Marcus, C. And Dovey, K (1991) 'Cohousing an option for the 1990s' *Progressive Architecture* Vol6.
- <sup>49</sup> See for example, the towns of Poundbury, Dorset, and Seaside, Florida : Hardy, Dennis (2006) *Poundbury: The Town that Charles Built* (London: Town and Country Planning Association), Prince of Wales (1989) *A Vision of Britain: a personal view of architecture* (London:

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Doubleday), Katz, Peter (1994) *The New Urbanism: toward an architecture of community* (New York: McGraw-Hill), <http://www.seasidefl.com/communityHistory.asp>.

<sup>50</sup> For example, 'Our attractive community hall is used often, for meetings, shared meals 2-3 times a week, parties, workshops, rehearsals, slide shows, concerts, and meetings. We know our neighbors and help each other out in many ways.' Rosewind CoHousing, PortTown Washington <http://www.cohousing.org/directory/view/2046>'

<sup>51</sup> The nature of the interaction varied according to the nature of the space. For example, regular formal interactions occurred inside some common indoor spaces (meeting rooms) but other, equally important, frequent informal interactions occurred in other spaces (such as common laundries and parking areas). See Williams (2005), p210.

<sup>52</sup> My emphasis: EarthSong Eco-Neighbourhood, Waitakere, New Zealand. <http://www.earthsong.org.nz/>

<sup>53</sup> See <http://www.earthsong.org.nz/process/meeting.html>

<sup>54</sup> See Sargisson, L. (2003) "Surviving Conflict: New Zealand's Intentional Communities" *New Zealand Sociology* Vol 18 (2)

<sup>55</sup> Some real examples from my own fieldwork observations have included differing opinions about socially acceptable times for playing the drums in the music room, disputes about whose turn it is to clean the community kitchen, and conflicts over the use of non-organic pesticides in common gardens.

<sup>56</sup> Jackson Place Cohousing (Seattle) Vision Statement <http://www.seattlecohousing.org/Vision.html>

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, Meltzer, 2000 and Poley and Stephenson (2007).

<sup>58</sup> Naess, A (1973) 'The Shallow and the Deep: long-range ecology movement' in *Inquiry*, 16

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Sargisson L. and Sargent L.T. (2004), *Living in Utopia: New Zealand's Intentional Communities* (Aldergate: Ashgate) and Sargisson, L. (2000) *Utopian Bodies and the Politics of Transgression* London: Routledge)

<sup>60</sup> Fromm, (1991) p193.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> For example, cohousing rules often require that cars are parked near the site entrance, away from homes. The use of vehicles is kept to a minimum on site, 'forcing' members to get out of their cars and walk past each others' homes. At EarthSong Community in New Zealand, for example, coming home from work involves parking (or getting off the bus), and walking past the workshops and commercial buildings at the front of the site, along paths that pass the kitchen windows, where your neighbours are cooking supper, past the children's play areas and community house, to your home which overlooks the community gardens. This is a typical example of a walk through a cohousing settlement, where the layout of space facilitates interaction within the community. It is possible because the group owns the land, members have the resources to develop it and existing property rules are adapted to a specific purpose.

<sup>63</sup> Unlike canonical utopian texts and experiments: Thomas More, for example, writing in the sixteenth century England of Henry VIII, envisaged a society without private ownership, Gerard Winstanley and the Diggers tried to establish communities on the commons in 1649.

<sup>64</sup> 'What is CoHousing? Canadian CoHousing Network <http://www.cohousing.ca/whatis.htm>

<sup>65</sup> Kathryn McCamant & Charles Durrett 'Cohousing Communities Sustaining Ourselves, Sustaining Our Communities' <http://www.ecovisionquest.com/cohousing.htm> accessed 29.01.10

<sup>66</sup> Williams (2005) p202.