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Cohousing – a great potential for sustainable housing and neighbourhood development

Abstract

In the last 30 years the number of cohousing projects has been increased in response to major societal trends. The demographic change including aging populations, decreasing household sizes and diverse family structures is reflected in a growing demand for new dwelling types.

Cohousing projects are mainly characterized by an orientation on community and participation in planning and management of the projects. A wide range of projects has been developed in the last years (e.g. cooperation with municipal housing companies, traditional and new cooperatives, building communities).

Cohousing is discussed from different perspectives. Against the background of individualization there is a growing demand for community. Cohousing projects are created with community spaces and realize intergenerational housing projects with mutual assistance for the elderly and families. In view of gentrification and rising rents many of the initiatives are placing value on the provision of affordable housing. Most of the projects represent high ecological standards. Due to the engagement of the residents many of the cohousing projects interact with surrounding neighbourhoods demonstrating the potentials for developing sustainable districts.

Cohousing projects offer new qualities of life and are growing in relevance for our cities. In the last years a professional network of engaged residents, housing experts, architects and intermediary actors emerged. But political support and integration into housing strategies is still insufficient.