Can self-organised co-housing communities be understood as situations of ‘common pool resources’?

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***Abstract***

In contemporary societies, ‘home’ is a private place; a place for a person’s or family’s daily routines, protection, rest, identity and individual meanings (Easthope 2004). However, in co-housing, a group of individual homes are part of a larger entity comprising different private, semi-private and common areas within the housing project. In some cases, specific areas can even be shared with the surrounding neighbourhoods, as public areas. Homes in co-housing are thus different and much more oriented towards communality than mainstream individual housing. This paper applies the theory of the commons (Ostrom 1990) to shed light on sharing practices in co-housing and on the workings of self-organisation processes. The paper presents findings from the authors’ case studies of different co-housing projects currently under construction and from established co-housing communities. Methods include qualitative interviews and participant observation. Preliminary findings show that co-housing communities are organised spatially, socially and visionary.

Easthope, Hazel (2004) *A place called home*, Housing Theory and Society, 21:3, 128-138.

Ostrom, Elinor (1990) *Governing the Commons; The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*, Cambrigde Universtiy Press, UK.