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Article

Exploring the impact areas of cohousing: A scoping review and thematic analysis of post-2000 studies

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the "cohousing" model as an alternative response to the commodification of housing and the accompanying environmental, social, and economic challenges. Focusing on cohousing as a holistic framework for social development, it traces the historical evolution of collaborative housing models to highlight their conceptual distinctions. A scoping review was conducted to conceptually clarify the impacts of cohousing, as it calls for a transformation of the home and all related factors as a form of daily life reform. For this purpose, studies on the cohousing model published between 2000 and 2024 were examined using the Web of Science and Scopus databases. From these, 87 articles that met the criteria were selected, and the approaches they used to address this housing model were analyzed. By identifying one or more contexts in which cohousing was studied in each article, a map of academic and practical impact areas was created. The analysis revealed that cohousing is addressed within five main themes: Political economy, social capital, resident profiles, design, and gender. These themes and their sub-themes are presented in a table reflecting the research trends of the given period (Table 2). The findings and evaluations aim to offer a comprehensive, interdisciplinary perspective for policymakers, local governments, and intentional communities interested in cohousing.

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INTRODUCTION

This article examines the cohousing model, which has emerged as an alternative response to the commodification of housing and the accompanying environmental, social, and economic challenges. Cohousing, understood here as a collaborative and shared housing approach, offers a means of rediscovering sociality through spatial practices. Rather than representing a noval invention, it is a model shaped by accumulated social and spatial experiences throughout history. The following part situates the contemporary cohousing model within its historical and intellectual context, tracing the ideas and experiences that have influenced its evolution. Due to its varying applications in different countries, the term cohousing is used in this study as an umbrella term derived from the Danish word *bofaellesskaber*, meaning "living communities." In this regard, the Danish model, which encompasses a intergenerational community of people of all ages, genders, ethnicities, and financial means, continues to be the gold standard for cohousing worldwide.

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The purpose of this research is to conceptually clarify the sphere of influence of cohousing by mapping and analyzing the existing literature. Starting with the research question, "What is known about the sphere of influence of cohousing?" a scoping review method was employed to avoid overlooking the different layers of the social and political infrastructure that transform space. The analysis of 87 full-text articles provides a comprehensive and interdisciplinary overview relevant to policymakers, local authorities, and intentional communities. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that contemporary cohousing is not an isolated phenomenon but a continuation of historical and philosophical movements. By examining how themes such as political economy, social capital, and gender intersect with the historical roots of cohousing, it bridges the gap between theoretical foundations and contemporary practice. The article proceeds by outlining the inclusion and exclusion criteria applied in the review, followed by the presentation of the main findings.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Cohousing's historical development may not have followed the same trajectory as housing throughout architectural history. The background of cohousing can be collectively represented by the three anthologies discussed in this study. These anthologies are respectively, a) the communities living together as communes that embraced Thomas More's *Utopia* and were called utopian socialists due to their concern for equality, b) material feminists who questioned the role of women in the home and society, and c) feminist architects who challenged architecture embedded with gendered values. Figure 1 illustrates this growth process through the metaphor of a snowball, showing the interrelated nature of these anthologies. The failure of one anthology to reach completion suggests that subsequent processes may also remain incomplete or never be fully realized. For this reason, the chronological sequence and the broadening of the concept are explained in terms of an internal evolution.

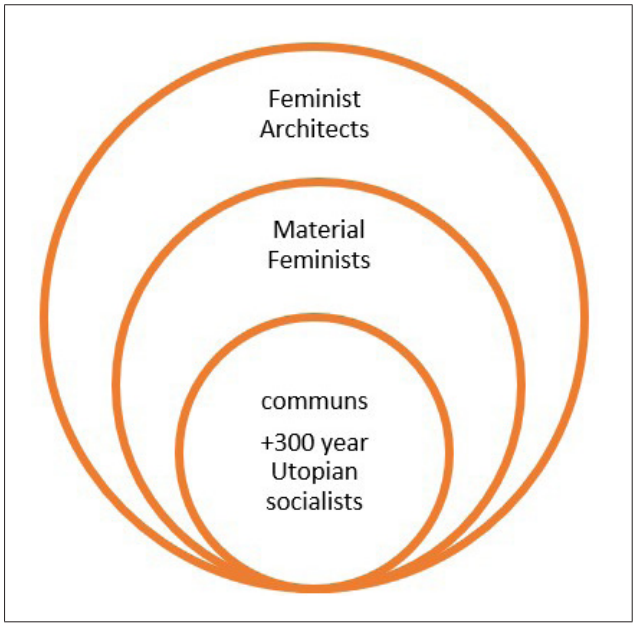

Figure 1. Cohousing background diagram (Designed by the Authors).

Utopian Socialists

The concept of communal habitation was born when the vegetarian commune Homakoeion was founded 2000 years ago (Meltzer, 2006). The term "Utopia" was first used by Thomas More in his book of the same name in 1516 (Hayden, 1977; Vestbro and Horelli, 2012). In this utopia, which translates to "a good and nowhere place," men and women have equal rights, and private property does not exist (Vestbro & Horelli, 2012). More's notion of utopia is said (Vestbro & Horelli, 2012) to have influenced the religious and ideologically driven groups later referred to as "utopian socialists" (Hardy, 1979; Hayden, 1977). In response to the inequalities brought about by the Industrial Revolution, these communities experimented with various communal housing programs in the 1800s (Hardy, 1979). These ideological and religious groups expressed their shared values through architecture that reflected their common beliefs.

Material Feminists

The American Woman's Home, an instruction manual, was published in 1869 by Catherine Beecher and her sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe. The Beecher sisters envisioned women as secluded yet responsible for every aspect of household life in an effort to maximize their authority (Hayden, 1981). The term "material feminists" was used to describe this subset of feminists who focused solely on material concerns. Although Beecher and other material feminists sought to enhance women's power, they failed to address class inequality by concentrating exclusively on gender. Nonetheless, their ideas laid the foundation for later emancipatory efforts.

Feminist Architects

Feminist architects started by challenging the isolated domestic architecture, learning from the mistakes of earlier, unidirectional material methods. In 1880, Marie Stevens Howland introduced the concept of "unified labor" by designing a city layout in Topolobampo, Mexico, featuring apartment hotels with sufficient childcare and kitchenless homes (Hayden, 1978). Between 1880 and 1890, the construction of collective kitchens, laundromats, and separate hotels began. The first public kitchen initiative was launched in 1890 by Ellen Swallow Richards and Mary Hinman Abel (Hayden, 1978). Based on their trial, the two women laid the foundation for cooperative housing and promoted the idea of "cooperative housekeeping." In the following years, cooperative cleaning, dining clubs, and cooked-food delivery gained popularity.

In California, Alice Constance Austin developed a housing design in 1915 that included kitchenless homes connected to a common kitchen (Hayden, 1978). A critical lesson emerged from these two unsuccessful city-scale projects: Smaller-scale initiatives were more viable. The Swedish model, widely regarded as the earliest instance of cohousing, was the first practical application of these progressive concepts on a smaller scale.

These concepts also took shape with similar developments in Europe. For instance, the "Fick's Collective" building, constructed in Copenhagen in 1903, was the first structure in Europe to feature a central kitchen, following similar advances in America (Vestbro, 1992). Hemgården Centralkök, built in Stockholm between 1905 and 1907, was the second single-kitchen home in Europe (Vestbro, 1992). The Hemgården building, accessible from the central kitchen via service elevators, was constructed to reduce expenses by hiring fewer maids and to make the apartments smaller, rather than to promote women's employment outside the house. In 1935, architect Sven Markelius and social reformer Alva Myrdal introduced the term *kollektivhus* (collective housing) in Sweden (Caldenby, 2021). Unlike earlier cases that aimed to replace domestic servants, they viewed community living as a means to enable women to combine paid labor outside the home with domestic chores. Services in the first *kollektivhus* were provided by paid staff, and the building featured both a dining hall and a nursery. The concept of collective housing in Sweden declined in the 1950s due to the rise of the housewife ideal and the absence of labor shortages. However, between 1965 and 1974, the Swedish government launched the "Million Program," offering state support for the construction of one million homes (Caldenby, 2021). Interest in collective housing grew during this period, as these new residences lacked social features, gender equality, and ecological ideals (Caldenby, 2021). The *Small Collective House*, the first Swedish model for shared housework, was created in 1977 at the behest of a group of feminists. It was based on cooperation rather than division of labor and operated without employed staff (Caldenby, 2021; Saarikangas and Horelli, 2018; Blomberg and Kärnekull, 2019).

The Swedish model served as inspiration for Denmark's shift to *Bofællesskab* following the initial effort at centralized kitchens (Larsen, 2019). In 1960, Copenhagen saw the construction of the first *Bofællesskab*. Around the same time, the Netherlands adopted the Danish model, which would later be regarded as the forerunner of modern cohousing. Two American architects, McCamant and Durrett, were drawn to Denmark's innovative cohousing concept, primarily driven by social interaction. As a result, they published *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves* in 1988, the first book to introduce the term "cohousing." Following its publication, cohousing began to gain traction in the US as a growing trend. Since 1990, the US cohousing model has been implemented as a modified version of the Danish model, adapted to its own sociocultural framework (Fromm, 2000a).

Instead of being a top-down paradigm, these four anthologies show how a housing model evolves through experimentation and necessity. In terms of implementation, governance, or architectural typology, the concept of cohousing has produced several variations over time. Alongside the term "cohousing," various countries have also created other terms with more or less specific definitions.

The Netherlands and the Flemish region of Belgium (prior to 2011[1]) (De Vos & Spoormans, 2022) referred to cohousing as "Central Wonnen," meaning central living. In contrast, the Czech Republic and the rest of Belgium use the term "cohousing" (Vestbro, 2010). In Germany and Austria, the term "Bougruppen" is used, which refers to co-living, although the governance structure differs from that of cohousing. In France the term "Habitat Participatif" is used, while the UK, Belgium, and more recently, France, refer to the concept as "Community Land Trust" (CLT). Spain and Switzerland, on the other hand, use the term "cooperative." However, some of the phrases, shaped by national housing regulations, are more inclusive than others. For instance, in the UK, "community-led housing" is a broad term that encompasses "cohousing," "cooperative housing," and "CLTs" (Griffith Jepma & Savini, 2024). Some authors also use inclusive terminology. According to Arbell (2023), community-led housing includes CLTs, cooperative housing, cohousing, self- and custom-built housing, and self-help housing. Similarly, Czischke (2018) categorizes self-organized housing, community-led housing, and participative housing under the broader term "collaborative housing." To conduct research specifically on the cohousing model, it is essential to distinguish between these various housing models based on their unique characteristics. Therefore, the next section provides a detailed explanation of the decision-making process in light of these distinctions.

The philosophical and practical foundations of contemporary cohousing are the result of an accumulation of ideas from utopian socialism, material feminism, and feminist architecture. These three approaches, each contributing to a re-evaluation of community and household space, collectively built the groundwork for modern cohousing. This historical progression culminated in the Danish *Bofællesskab* model, which is seen as the direct ancestor of today's cohousing movement. Therefore, cohousing is a way of life that brings together social and spatial values, shaped by a rich history of shared ideals.

METHOD

The review was conducted as a qualitative mapping study following Arksey and O'Malley's methodological frame-

work, which was the first to be published in this field (Levac et al., 2010) and remains in use today[2]. This framework conceptualizes *scoping* as a process of "mapping" evidence to define the breadth and depth of a subject, although its definition and purpose remain debated (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010; Tricco et al., 2018). This approach provides a sufficiently detailed procedure to enable replication of the study by other researchers. The review consists of five steps.

The first step in identifying the characteristics that influence cohousing—a housing style more prevalent in some countries and absent in others—was to formulate the following research question: *What is known about the sphere of influence of cohousing?* The second step involved searching for relevant research, beginning with a review of the historical evolution, terminology, and diversity of the literature, without restrictions on publication year, type, or language. As a result of this investigation, the first and second sections of the study were structured accordingly. This study examines the term "cohousing" and the model it represents, as previously defined by McCamant and Durrett (2011) and described by Vestbro (2010) as "the most appropriate term for housing to refer to a sense of togetherness and community." In this context, the second step also included a search for studies that adhered to the cohousing principles (Table 1).

For this study, the Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus databases were selected. The earliest instances of cohousing after 1970 in Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands constitute the first wave, which is categorized into waves based on time and geographic context. The second wave refers to the North American model that emerged in the 1990s, while the third wave includes models from Southern Europe, South America, Australia, and East Asia that appeared after 2000. Therefore, the study's scope is defined as post-2000 (2000–2024, up to and including April), when cohousing began to gain traction in various countries worldwide.

To select research for the third step, the papers were studied in three phases: Full text, abstract, and title. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) method (Tricco et al., 2018) was applied in the fourth step to refine the articles, which involved graphing the data (Figure 2). The 87 articles selected for full-text reading were compiled into an Excel spreadsheet for the fifth step, which focused on aggregating and summarizing the findings. The approaches used as the basis for the cohousing review were noted in columns, and related themes were grouped under a common cluster name (Table 2). As a result, all articles were categorized into five thematic clusters.

FINDING

This section presents the results of the full-text analysis of 87 articles. The findings, derived directly from the literature, are categorized into five thematic clusters, offering a

Table 1. Criteria for inclusion and exclusion of paper during the review.

	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Management/Development Type	- Bottom-up management, including the project design and processes. - Bottom-up management, excluding construction.	- Residents not involved in project or management. - Top-down approaches (state or private company).
Stakeholders	- Intentional community*. - Self-built housing. - Cooperative/NGO-built housing. - Architect-designed housing initiated upon community request.	- State- or privately-led housing.
Architectural requirements	- Common indoor/outdoor areas.	- No shared area management.
Ideological	- Social, ecological, economic and gender ideologies aligned with intergenerational housing.	- Affordable housing only. - Senior cohousing. - Eco-villages.
Article type	- Articles in WoS and Scopus.	- Book sections. - Book reviews. - Conference reports.
Interdisciplinarity	- Articles from disciplines related to cohousing.	- Covid-19-related reviews.
Publication date	- Published 2000–2024 (inclusive).	- Published before 2000
Publication language	- English and Turkish.	- Languages other than English and Turkish.

*'Intentional community' refers to a multi-family community that is intentionally gathered together with the intention of housing together.

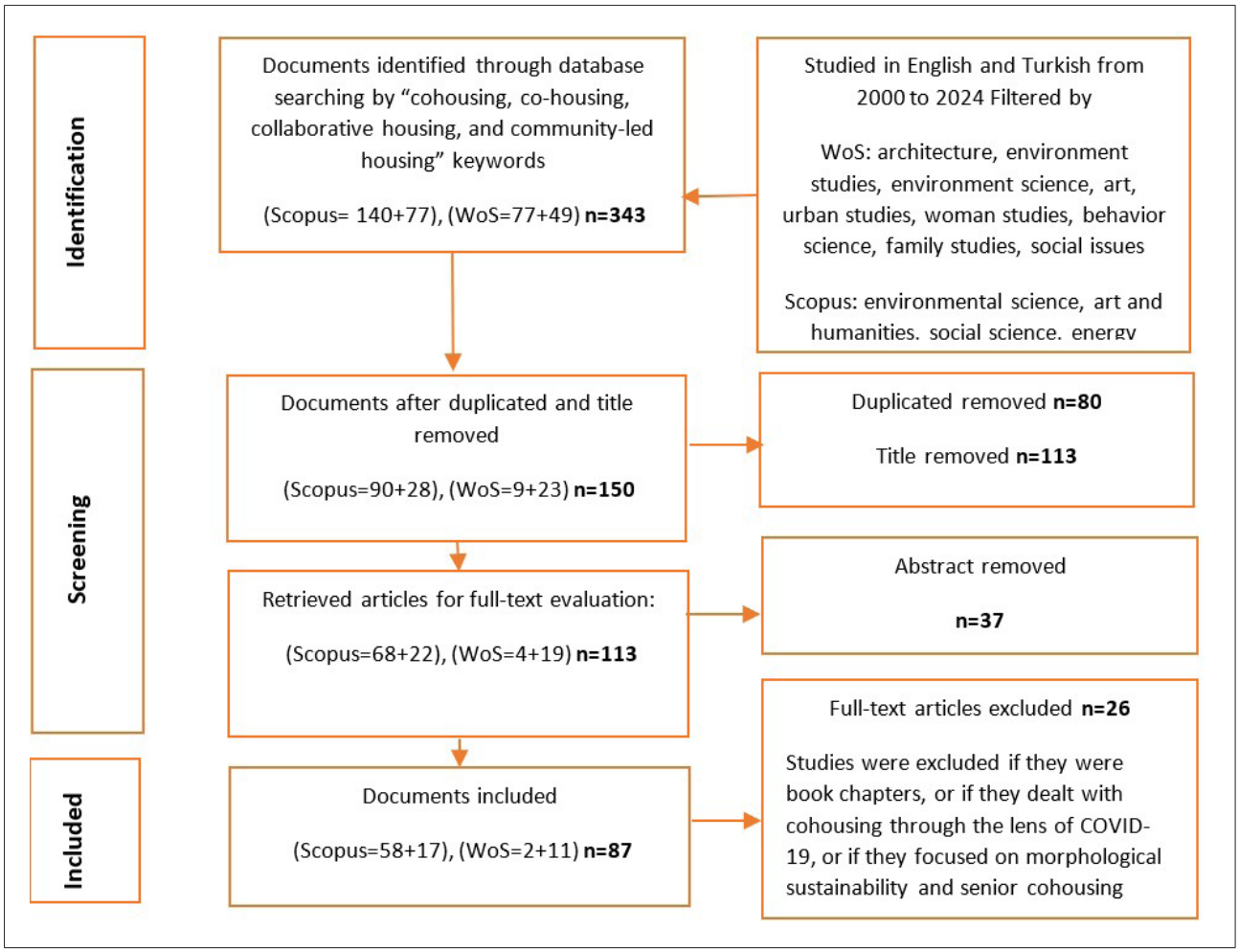

Figure 2. PRISMA flow diagram for elimination and inclusion of articles.

comprehensive overview of the field's current state. Table 2 provides a visual representation of these themes and their sub-clusters. A detailed discussion and interpretation of these results will be provided in the Discussion section.

Political-Economics

This thematic cluster included the majority of the analyzed articles, with 50 out of 87 falling under this category. The main political-economic cluster has four sub-clusters: Housing policies, barriers to expansion, tenure, and economic evaluation. In addition to studies exploring the desire to further develop cohousing (Arbell, 2022; Blomberg and Kärnekull, 2019; Boyer and Leland, 2018; Kvietkute and Hauge, 2022), this cluster includes research describing successful policy decisions and support in countries that have already achieved positive outcomes (De Vos and Spoormans, 2022; Put and Pasteels, 2022; Lenel, Demonty, & Schaut, 2020; Scheller and Thörn, 2018; Droste, 2015; Garcia, 2023). The studies in the first group report the effects of political variations across countries and often include comparative analyses. They examine legal frameworks in different national contexts. The second set of research focuses on identifying the policies that lead to successful outcomes within specific geographic settings. Beyond global geopolitical distinctions, variations in municipal support within countries—such as differences between Austrian states (Lang and Stoeger, 2018) and Swedish municipalities (Blomberg and Kärnekull, 2019)—have demonstrated that national policies produce varied results. For instance, the German government encourages cohousing initiatives during the planning, construction, or land distribution phases, and the existing literature frequently highlights municipal policies that encourage these projects (Lang and Stoeger, 2018; Droste, 2015; Laine, Helamaa, Kuoppa, & Alatalo, 2018; Schelisch, Spellerberg, & Vollmer, 2019).

According to studies examining the relationships between residents, developers, and other actors involved in the cohousing development process, the primary barrier to advancing this practice is the lack of awareness and knowledge among stakeholders (Arbell, 2022; Put and Pasteels, 2022; Horňáková and Jíchová, 2020; Blomberg and Kärnekull, 2019; Arrigoitia and Tummers, 2019; Thankamoniyan and

Table 2. Thematic clustering of studies with full text reading.

ARTICLES	POLITICAL-ECONOMICS Theme 1				SOCIAL CAPITAL Theme 2			RESIDENT ANALYSIS Theme 3			DESIGN Theme 4	GENDER Theme 5		
	TENURE	ECONOMIC DOWNSIZING, AFFORDABILITY	EXPANSION BARRIERS	HOUSING POLICIES, STAKEHOLDERS	HEALTH	SENSE OF COMMUNITY	SOCIAL SUPPORT	MOTIVATIONS	DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS	BEHAVIORAL TRANSFORMATION	DESIGN	COMMONS	FEMINISM	CARE
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Table 2. Continue.

ARTICLES	POLITICAL-ECONOMICS Theme 1				SOCIAL CAPITAL Theme 2			RESIDENT ANALYSIS Theme 3			DESIGN Theme 4	GENDER Theme 5		
	TENURE	ECONOMIC DOWNSIZING, AFFORDABILITY	EXPANSION BARRIERS	HOUSING POLICIES, STAKEHOLDERS	HEALTH	SENSE OF COMMUNITY	SOCIAL SUPPORT	MOTIVATIONS	DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS	BEHAVIORAL TRANSFORMATION	DESIGN	COMMONS	FEMINISM	CARE
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Table 2. Continue.

ARTICLES	POLITICAL-ECONOMICS Theme 1				SOCIAL CAPITAL Theme 2			RESIDENT ANALYSIS Theme 3			DESIGN Theme 4	GENDER Theme 5		
	TENURE	ECONOMIC DOWNSIZING, AFFORDABILITY	EXPANSION BARRIERS	HOUSING POLICIES, STAKEHOLDERS	HEALTH	SENSE OF COMMUNITY	SOCIAL SUPPORT	MOTIVATIONS	DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS	BEHAVIORAL TRANSFORMATION	DESIGN	COMMONS	FEMINISM	CARE
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* The articles included in the full text review listed from 1 to 87 are listed chronologically and presented in Appendix.
* The reason why the total number of articles belonging to clusters is not 87 is that some articles have worked on more than one theme.

Jagadisan, 2021; Williams, 2005a; Czischke, 2018). The level of interest in cohousing has also been analyzed in relation to its development criteria (Boyer and Leland, 2018). Boyer and Leland (2018) examine this in detail and discover that those who express interest in cohousing are not necessarily the same as those who become residents. Based on this, they speculate that the slow growth of cohousing is not due to a lack of interest but rather to its limited accessibility. This finding indicates that multiple factors influence whether individuals adopt a particular cohousing model, and the relationship between expressed interest and adoption remains inconclusive (Boyer and Leland, 2018). In their attempt to quantify these factors through a sample, Sanguinetti and Hibbert (2018) found that individuals who were attracted to cohousing and genuinely wished to live in such communities have distinct demographic characteristics compared to those who have previously lived in cohousing. They identified that the level of experience with cohousing was the most significant difference (Sanguinetti and Hibbert 2018). The literature suggests that limited awareness, interest, and expertise contribute to the niche status of cohousing in many countries.

In addition to criticizing housing policies that encourage individual ownership, studies examining another subcategory, tenure, have explored concerns surrounding the ownership of private cohousing units (Larsen, 2019; Blandy, 2023; Bossuyt, 2021; Beck, 2020). Germany has made significant progress in cohousing, primarily due to its strong rental housing tradition and recent municipal subsidies

(Schelisch et al., 2019). According to Bossuyt (2021), the interests of residents, including communal behaviors, are directly linked to the ownership, management, and concession rights in a shared housing model. In summary, the political, economic, and legal dimensions of tenure are essential to the accessibility of cohousing.

Support for self-build initiatives has grown in several European nations in response to the economic crisis. This shift is interpreted in the literature as emphasizing collective approaches in response to economic challenges in housing. However, it is important to realize that providing affordable housing is not the only economic solution to the housing crisis. While cost is a significant consequence of cohousing, it is not its primary objective. Product-related factors, such as the use of low-cost and potentially subpar materials, can impact overall construction costs and may lead to long-term environmental issues. In contrast, process-related factors, such as organizational structure, level of involvement, and construction time, also influence costs during the building phase (Brysch and Czischke, 2022). Furthermore, achieving high energy efficiency and privacy standards often comes at a higher cost (Brysch and Czischke, 2022). The literature indicates that cohousing affordability is influenced by multiple factors, suggesting it should not be considered a singular concept. For instance, in the Netherlands, self-built housing is generally more affordable than turnkey housing (Bossuyt, Salet, & Majoor 2017). However, successful examples in the UK have been observed to compromise on affordability (Arbell, 2022).

The economic impact of cohousing extends beyond personal assets. Housing patterns and consumption habits are directly influenced by the UN's adoption of "economic growth" as the eighth Sustainable Development Goal in September 2015. According to research, sharing and cohabitation are significant approaches to achieving social, ecological, and economic sustainability (Scheller and Thörn, 2018; Savini, 2023; Lietaert, 2010). However, these studies also draw attention to the tensions between economic growth and sustainability. Cohousing addresses issues such as waste management and the reduction of resource use, including energy, land, and material goods (Williams, 2008).

Social Capital

The subthemes of social support, health, and sense of community are all part of the social capital thematic cluster (33 articles out of 87). Realizing social interaction within physical space has been frequently reported in the literature as contributing to social sustainability. The reviewed literature indicates that declines in social harmony and transformations in traditional values are factors associated with the emergence of cohousing (Nayak, Dash, Amin, & Priyashantha, 2023; Jarvis and Bonnett, 2013). Most studies assume that cohousing provides benefits such as social support (fulfilling needs), social integration (counteracting isolation), belonging, security, and community (Nayak et al., 2023; Markle R, et al., 2015; Sanguinetti, 2014; Cortés-Urra et al., 2023; Ruiu, 2016; Moradi and Hoseini, 2022). These findings are further supported by qualitative research highlighting the positive effects of cohabitation on well-being, active living, and healthy eating (Schetsche, Jaume, Gago-Galvagno, & Elgier, 2021; McClatchey et al., 2023; Arbell, 2022; Kehl and Then, 2013; Warner, Sutton, & Andrews, 2020).

According to Putnam (2000), social capital consists of elements of social organization, including connections, conventions, and trust that promote coordinated behavior and enhance societal efficiency. Putnam's (2000) definition of social capital is frequently used in contemporary literature. The cultural and social capital of a society often includes education levels, knowledge and skills, tools used, and books read (Arbell, 2022). In the context of cohousing, Ruiu (2016) suggests that self-management, decision-making involvement, and physical design contribute to the formation of social capital. Williams (2005a) asserts that building social capital can lead to economic benefits such as increased GDP, a more productive workforce, improved education, and reduced crime rates. Cohousing has been associated with social inclusion and the development of social capital in the literature. Civic engagement is another concept examined in this context. Research shows that cohousing residents demonstrate high levels of civic involvement, a key component of social capital, as evidenced by studies conducted in the United States (Berggren, 2020), Germany (Kehl and Then, 2013), and Italy (Bianchi and Costa, 2024).

Resident Analysis

The sub-clusters of motivation, demographic analysis, and behavioral transformation comprise the resident analysis cluster, which includes 23 of the examined publications. Most of these studies are based on case studies and/or data collected through resident surveys and interviews. These studies collectively produce a sociodemographic map of cohousing by depicting the characteristics of individuals who currently reside in or intend to move into cohousing communities. Numerous studies reveal that cohousing residents are predominantly middle-aged, white, educated, and middle-class individuals (Arbell, 2022; Jakobsen and Larsen, 2018; Sanguinetti and Hibbert, 2018; Berg, Wielen, Maussen, & Arentze, 2020; Lang, Carriou, & Czischke, 2018; Korpela, 2012). However, Arbell (2022) suggests that cohousing, as a conscious communal effort, may face challenges regarding inclusivity due to its high cultural capital.

Studies under the motivation sub-cluster, which examine the reasons individuals choose cohousing, have identified a variety of social (e.g., sociality, security, and gender), ecological, and economic motivations, influenced by the geopolitical context of each country (Wang, Pan, Hadjri, 2020; Markle et al., 2015; Kvietkute and Hauge, 2022; Vestbro,

2000; Fromm, 2000a; Chatterton, 2013). Privacy concerns, however, remain the primary factor discouraging individuals from joining cohousing communities (Vestbro, 2010; Put and Pasteels, 2022; Thankamoniyan and Jagadisan, 2021; Williams, 2008; Holtzman, 2024). The behavioral transformation sub-cluster focuses on the behavioral changes that cohousing participants experience and the behavioral differences they exhibit. These studies report increased social cohesion (Schetsche et al., 2021; Berggren, 2020; Boonstra, 2016; Sanguinetti, 2014) and heightened ecological sensitivity (Meltzer, 2000).

Design

The design cluster, which has 21 articles, is the only topic cluster in the literature review that is not further subdivided into smaller clusters. However, rather than existing independently, this cluster is constantly linked to the social capital, gender, and political economy clusters. Cohousing has been described in the literature as distinct from other co-living efforts due to its focus on social architecture (Ruiu, 2017). With a focus on participation-specifically involvement in decision-making-social architecture frames the building as both a product and a process. According to Ruiu (2017), participation is the primary characteristic that differentiates cohousing from conventional apartment complexes. In a fully constructed environment, residents have no physical control over the space and no social influence over other residents (Andersen and Lyhne, 2022). Participation, however, can reduce building costs, as noted by Brysch and Czischke (2022) and De Jorge-Huertas (2020), who focus on cost-related aspects of both the design and management process. Social architecture processes in cohousing enable residents, according to the literature, to participate in the consideration and implementation of their needs. Jarvis (2015) asserts that social architecture operates through interactions between people and place, reflection, learning, practice, and performance, as well as unseen emotional components such as motivation and well-being. The learning process through practice also results in behavioral changes.

One of the key components of cohousing is the use of a bottom-up approach in the project design process. However, the degree of flexibility within this approach is subject to debate. Some scholars argue that communities suffer when the construction process does not follow a bottom-up strategy (Andersen and Lyhne, 2022). Nevertheless, fully self-managed and resident-driven design and construction processes are nearly unachievable in many countries due to the current economic challenges. In the United States, where cohousing was previously resident-led (Williams, 2008), it is now often characterized by partnerships with professional developers (Fromm, 2000a). In Sweden- one of the countries with the highest building costs-cohousing has recently emerged primarily in the form of rental units provided by private companies or municipalities (Caldenby, 2021).

Up until now, research within the design cluster frequently reports that social benefits are associated with the evolution of architectural processes in cohousing. The following studies focus on social architecture design concepts in the context of cohousing. Social architecture principles refer to the incorporation of various social needs into architectural design. For instance, the Danish model's most crucial element—the dining routine—is equally significant in Malaysia. However, due to additional cleaning requirements, cleaning staff are hired to address this issue (Bin Hashim et al., 2021). In contrast to Denmark, which typically features low-rise, dense, and rural communities, Sweden practices cohousing primarily in multi-story apartment complexes (Blomberg and Kärnekull, 2019; Larsen, 2019; Caldenby, 2021; Jakobsen and Larsen, 2018). Through an interactive approach with Swedish architects, Yahia et al. (2023) examined the potential for successful cohousing in the United Arab Emirates and discussed the culturally significant balance between privacy and social contact. Their study concluded that the courtyard-type home, a traditional local architectural form, would be a suitable typology for the region (Yahia et al., 2023). Cohousing communities often include shared spaces such as guest rooms, kitchens, dining rooms, workshops, bicycle clubs, laundry facilities, gardens, and meeting rooms, depending on the level of collectivity. Numerous studies have examined the physical factors that influence social interaction, including parking lot layout (Ruiu, 2016; Williams, 2005a; Fromm, 2000a), size (De Jorge-Huertas and De Jorge-Moreno, 2024; Ledent, 2021; Griffith et al., 2024; Williams, 2005a), acoustics (Lenel et al., 2020; Marcus, 2000; Fromm, 2000a), and site selection (Nayak et al., 2023). Zhang (2020) analyzed a failed social sustainability project in China and identified several architectural flaws, including insufficient garden spaces, overly small private apartments, and an unsuitable height-to-distance ratio. These studies report that architects play a role in facilitating social interaction, which is frequently cited in the literature as an important objective of cohousing. In their analysis of the Danish model, McCamant and Durrett (2011) investigated physical characteristics such as size, density, and distance to ensure conditions of social interaction, aiming to determine the optimal numbers. These investigations have demonstrated that rational measurements can be applied to the relational dimension of space to enhance social contact.

Gender

There are two groups of studies within this cluster: The first group conceptualizes the ethics of care and its relationship to commoning (Wankiewicz, 2015; Arrigoitia et al., 2023), while the second group looks at the history of cohousing, which has been described in the literature as having a feminist orientation and is linked to efforts to address the gen-

dered division of labor (Horelli, 2013; Vestbro and Horelli, 2012; Jarvis, 2011; Toker, 2010).

The gendered division of labor is reinforced by the dichotomies such as individual/society, public/private, female/male, and reason/nature, resulting in a geographical separation of work and care. Linking places and works requires an "intermediary level" of space. By creating spaces between the public and private spheres, cohousing alters the dynamics of daily life (Horelli, 2013). The intermediate space-whether a room, neighborhood, or residence-is a spatial phenomenon that serves both as a place of activity and as a generator of meaning (Saarikangas and Horelli, 2018). Toker (2010) reports that women living in cohousing communities perform less housework compared to other housing types, resulting in a reduced domestic workload. Jarvis (2011) suggests that cohousing enables residents to engage in self-directed activities and reciprocal learning, rather than framing reduced domestic work and increased leisure time as solutions to consumerism and burnout.

According to Arbell (2023), communication is a dynamic process that both reflects and reproduces social situations. The concept of commoning is strongly tied to economics, promoting collectivization in opposition to the capitalist logic of commodification and individualization. Advocates of care as a commons argue that cohousing also resists capitalism by creating shared resources and fostering communal practices (Savini, 2023). Social and spatial segregation arises when certain groups in society have their rights and responsibilities removed or imposed upon them, making sustainability more challenging to achieve. According to Arrigoitia et al. (2023), cohousing challenges traditional notions of employment and social norms, influencing social relationships and community dynamics.

DISCUSSION

This review maps the existing literature to explore the impact of cohousing. The impact areas were examined to determine the breadth of the topic—specifically which disciplines, sectors, and social spheres it influences—and to assess the extent of its effects. This process involves understanding the relevance of the study not only within academia but also in practice, politics, and other regions of the world. By doing so, the impact areas provide insights into both the quality (depth) and the breadth (scope) of the impacts.

The findings of this review, which systematically categorize the literature into five thematic clusters, provide a crucial lens through which to reconsider the historical development of cohousing. For instance, the prominent political and economic theme identified in the contemporary literature directly parallels the motivations of early utopian socialists and materialist feminists. Their experimental housing models, a direct response to the social and economic inequalities of the Industrial Revolution, were fundamentally aimed at creating political transformations. This historical parallel, suggesting that social and political drivers are as critical as economic ones, is particularly evident in the case of the United Kingdom. Despite a relatively high level of economic welfare, cohousing has not become widespread cohousing (Williams, 2005b; Arbell, 2023; Killock, 2014). Our findings reveal a significant paradox here: The UK has been the leading country in academic research on cohousing. This suggests that a lack of institutional support, insufficient public awareness, and high land costs may be more critical factors than economic prosperity alone. This demonstrates that the core motivations behind cohousing, from historical precedents to modern manifestations, have been deeply intertwined with sociopolitical contexts.

The second most prominent theme identified in the cohousing literature is social capital, which examines the role of cohousing in fostering sociability and social relationships. The articles reviewed show that the evolution of early communal housing models—which often relied on paid staff—towards a more collaborative, resident-led approach was instrumental in the formation of these communities. This finding directly aligns with the historical background's emphasis on building community and strengthening social bonds, a key motivation in the earliest contemporary collaborative housing approaches. While participation is a central factor in strengthening social capital, a key contribution of this study is the emphasis on informed participation. As identified in the literature, unstructured participation can carry risks related to time, energy, and financial costs, and may even lead to conflicts that damage community bonds (Brysch and Czischke, 2022). Our findings demonstrate that the greatest threat to social capital is not just the absence of participation, but its mismanagement. Informed participation, tailored to a project's specific needs, is a critical strategy to mitigate these risks and ensure the sustainability of community bonds.

The third thematic cluster focuses on resident analysis, exploring who resides in cohousing communities and their motivations for doing so. This theme directly aligns with the historical background, as the desires of early utopian socialists and materialist feminists for creating alternative living models are reflected in the contemporary motivations of cohousing residents. Resident analysis thus serves as an excellent tool for examining the modern-day reflections of these historical pursuits. A key contribution of this study is the finding that existing resident analyses in the literature are often conducted in a one-dimensional manner, which can lead to misleading assumptions. While the literature rarely considers factors such as tenure, household diversity, or institutional support, we found that when these aspects are included, the common assumptions about cohousing residents are challenged (Jakobsen and Larsen, 2018). Our

study emphasizes the limitations of one-dimensional approaches and makes the inherent contradictions regarding cohousing resident profiles visible.

Another contribution of this study is to demonstrate the necessity of examining design and gender in conjunction. Feminist scholarship has long emphasized that space is not a neutral backdrop but an active agent in producing and reinforcing gendered inequalities. Yet, empirical attempts to test the intersections of design and gender remain scarce. This divergence presents a paradox: While the historical development of cohousing was fundamentally shaped by ideological movements focused on spatial and gender equality, current academic discourse often overlooks these very issues. The results suggest a need for future research to return to the foundational principles of cohousing, examining how design and gender dynamics continue to influence the success and inclusivity of these communities. The findings indicate that in cohousing, the gendered division of labor rooted in the public–private dichotomy is renegotiated through design, with "in-between spaces" emerging as critical arenas for reconfiguring identities and responsibilities. This suggests that bringing design and gender into the same analytical frame may open up a promising but underexplored line of inquiry, both theoretically and practically.

While this study's methodology was designed to be comprehensive, with searches conducted in both English and Turkish, a crucial finding is the significant scholarly gap in research on cohousing within the Turkish context. The absence of any articles on this topic, despite the inclusion of Turkish language publications in the search, highlights a clear need for future research to explore cohousing's potential and challenges in Türkiye.

The analysis addresses the question, 'What are the impacts of cohousing?' by synthesizing existing research and identifying gaps in the literature. However, what is truly important is to question what these findings mean in the context of the fundamental urban, social, and political challenges that modern society faces. In this context, cohousing represents more than just a housing alternative; it embodies a philosophical stance that challenges established ideologies.

Against the speculative housing spaces produced by political economy, cohousing reveals a mode of production beyond capitalism—a space created collectively by the community. In this sense, cohousing has the qualities of representing Henri Lefebvre's unification of 'conceived' and 'lived' space, thus forming a concrete example of Edward Soja's 'thirdspace' theory.

This 'thirdspace' is not merely a physical structure but an expression of social processes that support the bottom-up formation of social capital. In contrast to the assumption of a homogeneous community, cohousing exhibits an attitude that values and includes all differences. This approach counters segregating spatial arrangements by creating a more unifying and connective area that enables the intersection of genders.

CONCLUSION

This review maps the existing cohousing literature, revealing key thematic areas and their research intensity. Beyond simply mapping the field, it proposes a theoretical framework positioning cohousing as a philosophical stance against spatial injustice, neoliberal policies, and social isolation. The findings provide a foundational framework for new initiatives by policymakers and local governments, especially given the global housing crisis.

Although the study does not offer an in-depth analysis of cohousing in the Turkish context, it highlights a significant gap in the literature regarding this topic. By identifying key thematic areas, this research offers a clear starting point for academics and policymakers in Türkiye to explore the potential of cohousing within their unique cultural and economic landscape, rather than simply adopting models from other countries.

NOTES

[1]When the Flemish government began to encourage cohousing in 2011, the term "cohousing" gradually replaced "Central Wonnen."

[2] For further info see: Warner et al., 2020; McClatchey et al., 2023; Zapata & M. Stone, 2022; Carrere et al. 2020; Ige et al., 2018.

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Appendix: https://jag.journalagent.com/megaron/abs_files/MEGARON-02222/MEGARON-02222_(4)_MEGARON-02222_Appendix.pdf

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