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Rethinking community-based housing for older adults: a research agenda for spatial justice

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ABSTRACT

This critical review discusses community-based housing developments for minoritised older adults, examining literature on both top-down sheltered housing and grassroots-developed cohousing projects. It reviews and integrates perspectives from housing studies and gerontology to explore the benefits such housing arrangements provide (shelter, care and support, community) as well as their potential for including minoritised older adults. Going beyond discussions on affordability and accessibility, the paper applies an interpretive *spatial justice* lens to examine redistributive, recognitive, and representative justice concerning community-based housing projects. Rethinking how research has addressed matters of justice thus far, the paper concludes by laying the groundwork for a research agenda. Specifically, it argues that we a) need to view community-based housing as situated in a spatial context, b) pay attention to how older adults can participate in shaping community-based housing and its surroundings, and c) recognise older adults and their diverse identities within community-based housing.

Introduction

Many cities worldwide are facing housing crises, which especially affect people with a precarious position on the housing market (Madden & Marcuse, 2016; Potts, 2020). These include persons with low income, but also other minoritised groups, such as ethnic minorities or LGBTQ+ households, who might be discriminated against on the housing market (Lukes et al., 2019; Romero et al., 2020). At the same time, what has been termed the 'care crisis' (Dowling, 2021) has left many older adults without adequate

care, especially those with limited means (Deusdad et al., 2016; Sixsmith et al., 2019) or informal support (Connidis & Barnett, 2019; Tronto, 2017). As such, many older people are struggling to find suitable housing that provides care and support. While 'ageing in place' policy programmes often promote ageing in the own home (Forsyth & Molinsky, 2021; Lewis & Buffel, 2020), some older adults want or need to move.

Finding the right place to live in later life is crucial. Long-term residence fosters attachment to the places in which people have grown old in (Lebrusán and Gómez, 2022). Further, limited mobility makes the house and immediate neighbourhood vital for wellbeing and social inclusion (Prattley et al., 2020). Also, the availability of care and support might vary across places, making certain areas more suitable for ageing than others (Robinson et al., 2020).

Despite the importance of place for ageing, housing options designed for older people often remain limited, especially when they require support. Ageing in place policies as well as boundary lines between 'care at home' and 'care in homes' can hinder the development of accessible care and housing options beyond the private home and the institutional care facility (Forsyth & Molinsky, 2021; Knijn & Hiah, 2020). The latter is commonly perceived as unattractive (Gould et al., 2017).

In this context, community-based housing initiatives have emerged as viable alternatives for many older adults (Chum et al., 2022; Mahmood et al., 2022). Such projects promote ageing in place by providing independent shelter, care and support and by creating social connections. The benefits of community-based housing include barrier-free architecture, assistance with daily activities such as cooking to informal and formal care services (Howe et al., 2013). Further, initiatives might socially connect residents through day trips or group meals by offering shared spaces such as a community garden and a common kitchen.

However, while community-based housing projects might be particularly necessary for people with lower income or those who might be discriminated against in care homes (e.g., LGBTQ+ older adults, see Waling et al., 2019), recent research indicates a lack of inclusivity. Academic literature has raised concerns regarding the accessibility, affordability, diversity (Buffel & Phillipson, 2024; Davitt et al., 2017; Greenfield et al., 2013; Hou & Cao, 2021; Mahmood et al., 2022; Power, 2017) and spatial distribution (Robinson et al., 2020) of community-based housing, highlighting challenges in recruiting minoritised residents.

Who can age in community-based housing is (next to other factors) closely connected to the governance structures of these developments. While many different types of community-based housing exist, this paper focuses on cohousing and sheltered housing. Cohousing is traditionally community-led, allowing residents to shape their surroundings, while sheltered housing is commonly top-down implemented by NGOs, social housing, or private developers and thus often more accessible for different socio-economic groups. Focussing on housing types that vary regarding

the involvement of residents in governance mechanisms allows to reveal valuable insights on community-based housing and its potential for including diverse groups.

In this paper, we start with the premise that decent housing is a basic human right and that a lack thereof is an issue of *justice*. Reflections on the theoretical concept of justice concern fairness, democracy, responsibility, and rights, arguing that everyone deserves the appropriate place to live. Using an interpretive approach to reviewing literature, we explore community-based housing through Soja's (2010) work on spatial justice and the concepts of redistributive, recognitive, and representative justice (Knijn & Hiah, 2020). This approach enables a synthesis of the literature on the inclusivity of community-based housing for older adults and, building on that, the formulation of a research agenda centred on spatial justice. We ask: *what does a research agenda geared towards just community-based housing provision for older adults look like?* Rather than a systematic review, the selection of works in this critical review reflects a purposive focus on studies that illuminate justice-oriented challenges and opportunities of community-based housing for older adults. We draw on available empirical examples mainly from Europe, the United States, and Australia, reflecting where much of current English-language research on housing and ageing is situated.

Spatial justice and ageing

Concerned with general fairness, democracy, responsibility, and rights (Soja, 2010), spatial justice is a theoretical perspective that asks different actors to reflect on the fairness of processes and outcomes of, for example, the development of community-based housing for older adults. Justice has long been a matter of concern in housing and urban studies (Fainstein, 2010; Harvey, 1973; Soja, 2010) and is particularly used by movements calling for housing justice (Chatterjee et al., 2024; Lima, 2021). In ageing studies, reflections on justice are recently starting to get more attention (Buffel et al., 2024; Greenfield, 2018). Applying a justice lens to older adults and housing, we synthesise the literature on community-based housing for older adults and identify areas in need of further research. Specifically, we draw upon Soja's book 'Seeking spatial justice' (2010) and Knijn et al. (2020)'s definitions of redistributive, representative, and recognitive justice. The latter were developed through the Horizon2020 ETHOS project that integrated definitions of justice from different disciplines. A part of the ETHOS project focussed on care for older people, making the approach of Knijn and Hiah (2020) relevant to this paper.

Soja's ontology of spatial justice underpins the interpretive perspective of this study. He argues that space is a process with uneven spatial outcomes, of which some are inconsequential while others are deeply unjust. Whether something is just or not has to be studied in a specific context. This spatial understanding of justice describes justice as inherently

intertwined with the production of space (Iveson, 2011). It complements the focus on the importance of place for ageing, which was the starting point of this paper. Soja builds on arguments made by Harvey (1973) in 'Social justice and the city', theorising spatial justice by focusing on the co-constitution of space and society but avoids prescribing policies for a 'just city' (cf. Fainstein, 2010). Combined with Knijn and Hiah's principles of redistributive, recognitive, and representative justice, Soja's ontology offers a theoretical lens for studying just housing developments for older people across contexts.

First, *redistributive justice* directs researchers' focus towards matters of distribution. It stipulates that everyone should 'have access to resources in order to be capable of doing what one has reason to value' (Knijn & Hiah, 2020, p. 161)—or, applied to housing and ageing, it means to ensure appropriate places and care so older adults can do what they value. A spatial justice lens, then, points research interests to the visible outcomes of resource distributions, or in other words the distribution of community-based housing projects (Soja, 2010, p. 47).

Second, the *representative justice* principle states that older adults should have 'a say in order to participate in and give shape to the society [they live in]' (Knijn & Hiah, 2020, p. 161). Soja (2010) argues that we need to look beyond the distribution of resources (redistributive justice) and integrate a focus on the production of space in investigations of justice. Applied to the context of ageing, this critical spatial lens asks to interrogate how processes of space-making in the city include and affect older city dwellers and their places of ageing. In ageing studies, there is a growing call for an increased participation of older adults in urban planning (Buffel et al., 2024). When it comes to community-based housing, this lens points towards studying how community-based housing projects are developed and managed and, specifically, how and which older adults are involved.

Third, the difference among older adults should be recognised (Knijn & Hiah, 2020, p. 161)—this is termed *recognitive justice*. Older people are too often grouped into one homogenous category (Rauvola et al., 2022). Ageing has been called the 'blind spot' of geography (Finlay & Finn, 2021), and older adults' voices need to be considered when it comes to developing space (Cotterell & Buffel, 2023). Nancy Fraser (Fraser, 1995; Fraser et al., 2004), one of the most influential theorists on recognition, argues that recognitive justice is not about validating group identity categories, but rather about establishing status equality. According to her, injustices stem from unjust institutions, which create hierarchies that prevent different people from having equal status and not simply from a lack of acknowledgement for different identity categories. A spatial justice lens, thus, asks to study how older adults' preferences and identities are recognised in community-based housing projects and how their status is shaped and constructed by the places they live in.

Community-based housing for older adults

A wide range of terminology exists to describe different types of housing offering some care services for older adults (Howe et al., 2013). *Community*-based housing developments specifically prioritise social interaction and community. In this paper, we focus on two community-based housing types: cohousing, which is traditionally community-led, and sheltered housing, which is typically organised top-down by social housing providers or private developers. Examining these two types exemplifies different approaches to providing housing, care, support, and community for older adults while offering insights on issues of justice related to different governance arrangements. The following paragraphs outline the common features of cohousing and sheltered housing.

Cohousing

Though variations exist, cohousing projects generally 'offer private living arrangements with access to common spaces and promote interdependence between residents' (Chum et al., 2022, 189). What distinguishes cohousing from other specialist housing for older adults is a focus on self-governance (Baldwin et al., 2019), which flows into its built environment, the provided care and support, and the established community. Households live in a private *independent shelter*, share common areas and decide collectively on shared spaces and events (ibid.). Their design encourages social interaction and is developed in co-production with (prospective) residents. In terms of *care and support*, cohousing relies mostly on informal support through the resident community instead of formalised care services (Chum et al., 2022). Cohousing projects for older adults are often founded with the intention of caring about and for each other, e.g., driving a neighbour to a doctor. Further, the community aspect of cohousing is a major motivation for older adults to move to such developments (Glass, 2020; Glass & Norris, 2023).

Sheltered housing

Sheltered housing is housing with a focus on older people or persons with a disability (Fox et al., 2017). It often enables *independent living* through providing various formalised care services, such as a warden or a 24-h alarm system, activities to keep physically active, and benefits from the informal support of neighbours (Herbers & Meijering, 2015). While models can vary widely across country contexts, sheltered housing is typically less bottom-up organised than cohousing, meaning that these projects are not initiated by residents but by social housing providers or private developers. Some models of sheltered housing focus on 'providing affordable accommodations for its residents' next to some care services

(Chum et al., 2022, 189). Initiatives often have a common room or shared garden to foster a sense of *community*. However, the level of interdependence in sheltered housing is typically lower than in cohousing, as residents are not committed to co-organising daily life together.

Thus, cohousing and sheltered housing provide shelter, care and support as well as a community in different ways, showing the wide spectrum of community-based housing initiatives. Further, they might also offer this to different types of people in different places, raising questions about spatial justice.

A spatial justice perspective on community-based housing

Using a spatial justice lens, we examine how the principles of redistributive, representative, and recognitive justice have been addressed in recent literature on cohousing and sheltered housing. While there is an overlap across the different aspects of spatial justice, we examine them separately for the sake of conceptual clarity. Rather than evaluating which housing option is more spatially 'just', we aim to embed research on community-based housing within spatial justice discussions. In this way, we highlight how existing research has addressed justice and community-based housing thus far and what it has found (see Table 1, column 3).

The papers reviewed in this section focus on cohousing and/or sheltered housing for older people, and explicitly or implicitly engage with aspects of spatial justice. Literature was identified through database searches (Web of Science, Google Scholar) using terms such as inclusivity, availability, affordability, and accessibility and specific minoritised groups (e.g., migrants, LGBTQ+). Additional sources were identified through expert recommendations, reference tracking, and through the software ResearchRabbit. The identified literature primarily comes from ageing and housing studies. Given the limited number of relevant publications, we included all studies published since 2000, including literature reviews, qualitative, and quantitative research.

None of the identified studies explicitly use the term 'spatial justice'. However, many address key aspects of spatial justice such as: social inclusion and diversity (López Gómez et al., 2020; Mahmood et al., 2022), identity and recognition (Gráinne & Foley, 2019; Hellström & Sarvimäki, 2007), participation and governance (Hammond, 2018; Power, 2017) and the inclusion of minoritised groups (Lager et al., 2012; Meijering & Lager, 2014; Rosenwohl-Mack et al., 2022; Sullivan, 2014). Other studies engage with aspects of spatial justice more implicitly, for example by examining the wellbeing of older adults living in cohousing or sheltered housing (Cook et al., 2017; Corneliusson et al., 2019; Herbers & Meijering, 2015) or by comparing different types of housing projects (Hou & Cao, 2021).

Table 1. A research agenda for community-based housing (CBH) from a spatial justice perspective.

	A spatial justice lens points towards studying …	What elements of spatial justice has research started to address?	What could research address in the future?
Redistributive justice	… the distribution of community-based housing projects.	• distribution of CBH across social groups, especially for cohousing • spatial distribution of CBH	How CBH is embedded in a spatial context and how it affects this context → **spatialise**
Representative justice	… the way community-based housing projects are developed/managed and how older adults are involved in this process.	• internal governance mechanisms of cohousing projects • importance of participation for older adults in CBH	The role of different older adults in the process of developing and managing CBH → **understand processes**
Recognitive justice	… how older adults are acknowledged in their identities and how institutions shape the status of different people.	• CBH projects for specific minoritised older adults • in-depth narratives of older adults in CBH, specifically in sheltered housing	The complex identities of older adults in CBH, how difference is produced/ managed in CBH → **recognise difference**

Redistributive justice

The distribution of community-based housing for older adults has been explored in at least two ways (see Table 1, column 3). First, studies address the characteristics of older residents in community-based housing. Research on cohousing, in particular, has highlighted its predominantly white, highly educated, middle-class clientele, pointing to unequal access to such housing forms. Glass (2009), talking about a study conducted in the US, states that 'although diverse in many ways, respondents are generally homogeneous in social class and race and are mostly well-educated, typical of traditional cohousers' (298). Even if it is not addressed as the central issue in most papers, other works on ageing and cohousing also mention this distributional inequality (Glass, 2020; Hou & Cao, 2021). Pedersen (2015), tracing the history of senior cohousing groups in Denmark, argues that a more top-down approach to governance can be valuable when developing cohousing for older people, particularly because integrating a care component is costly and challenging for residents to manage independently (see also Riccò et al., 2024). Arrigoitia and West (2021) show how cohousing for older adults in the UK can be designed to include people with different socio-economic backgrounds by including apartments with different tenure types.

In contrast with cohousing, sheltered housing appears to be more likely to cater to minoritised groups such as people with experiences of homelessness, disabilities, health problems (Cook et al., 2017), or lower socio-economic status, indicated by low rates of owner-occupancy (Corneliusson

et al., 2019). Most work on the characteristics of residents in sheltered housing, however, concerns health status. Corneliusson et al. (2019) studied attributes of older residents in sheltered housing in Sweden compared to those ageing in place, using survey data. Their findings revealed that sheltered housing residents reported lower health status, reduced quality of life, and a higher likelihood of depressive moods, indicating a more minoritised position than those ageing in place. Van Bilsen et al. (2008) investigated older adults at risk of institutionalisation in two regions in the Netherlands (Zeeland and Limburg) and found that older adults in sheltered housing had a higher level of perceived autonomy, sense of security, and quality of life than those ageing at home.

Second, we identified one academic paper addressing the *spatial* distribution of community-based housing projects. Robinson et al. (2020) studied sheltered housing as one of many housing options in one geographical area in the UK, analysing who gets what housing in that area. They found that 'rather than a flexible regime providing a diverse suite of housing opportunities, older people—owners and renters—were faced with the traditional binary choice (18)', meaning the choice between ageing at home or moving into an institutional care facility. Focusing on sheltered housing (which they classify under 'specialist housing for older people'), they noted that a reduction in government subsidies in the UK led to a decline in the construction of such housing by public actors, with more and more specialist housing developed by private developers. However, in the area studied in the North of England, no privately developed specialist housing existed, likely due to the area being unattractive to investors. This research points to an unjust spatial distribution of housing options for older adults.

Representative justice

Representative justice urges us to look beyond the distribution of community-based housing to explore how these projects are developed and managed, specifically focusing on older adults' role in shaping these initiatives. Research has examined the internal governance processes of cohousing groups but has paid less attention to the participation of older adults in sheltered housing (see also Table 1, column 3).

Cohousing can offer opportunities for residents to shape their social environments. Baldwin et al. (2019) conducted a participatory research project in a regional community in southeast Queensland, Australia, exploring the needs and wishes of residents. Their findings suggest that cohousing is perceived as an appropriate place for ageing, especially because residents want to have a say in who they form a community with and how to govern the community and premises. Pfaff and Trentham (2022) studied the relationship between home environment and acts of 'doing'— what they call 'occupational engagement'—in senior cohousing in Sweden. Through interviews, home observation and document analysis, they

investigated what the group does together, what residents do individually and what changes over time. With their focus on 'doing', they investigated how older adults participate in processes of spacemaking, which is what we have previously highlighted as crucial for reflecting on just spatial production. As such, Pfaff and Trentham (2022) describe how people shape their social lives together through regular communal cooking or theatre groups. Older residents seemed to participate more in social life both within and outside of the cohousing community compared to their lives before moving in.

Further, Hammond (2018) depicts that cohousing can allow older residents to not only shape their social life but also create the physical space around them. By collaborating with a senior cohousing group in Manchester, UK, he found that the success of this involvement depends on the nature of the design process and specifically on the relationship between the architect and the cohousers. However, looking more closely at processes within cohousing also revealed power dynamics, for example, how differences in age and health among members influenced who defined tasks in cohousing groups, who executed them, and who was part of the community (Fernández Arrigoitia et al., 2023; Mahmood et al., 2022). The focus on such processes of governance in these studies emphasises how older adults can be encouraged to actively shape their social and physical environment in later life, thereby contributing to representative justice.

There seems to be less research on the development process of sheltered housing and the involvement of the resident community. This may be because co-production with residents is not a core value of sheltered housing, unlike cohousing, where self-organisation has historically been central. While we did not find studies directly examining participation of older adults in sheltered housing, issues of representation do emerge in research on these developments. For example, Cook et al. (2017), studying wellbeing of older adults in sheltered housing, find that the ability to adapt properties to meet resident needs enhanced their feelings of safety. This emphasises that having a sense of control and participation is important. The mixed-methods study was conducted with tenants of one sheltered housing service in Northeast England, which provides housing for around 1000 people. The authors further show how residents developed a chain of communication to let each other know who was visiting their building, ensuring a sense of safety for all. This displays the agency and will of residents to shape their surroundings, even if they were not asked to participate formally in the project's governance. Thus, looking at it from a representative justice perspective, Cook et al. (2017) portray the ability of older adults to participate in managing sheltered housing.

Recognitive justice

Recognitive justice emphasises the diverse identities of older adults and how they are acknowledged in community-based housing. Research has

started to address this in two ways (see also Table 1, column 3). First, some research has investigated specific minoritised groups in community-based housing projects. Lager et al. (2012**)** and Meijering and Lager (2014) show how a cohousing group for older Antillean migrants in the Netherlands has emerged as a safe and secure place to age for many belonging to this community. Living with people with similar backgrounds affirmed residents' cultures and identities. Similarly, Sullivan (2014) and Rosenwohl-Mack et al. (2022) found that LGBTQIA+ affordable senior housing groups were attractive to residents in the US because residents expected to be accepted there for who they were. At the same time, Rosenwohl-Mack et al. (2022) also point towards mixed feelings of certain residents regarding the LGBTQ+ inclusive and age-segregated focus of the studied sheltered housing project. Not all LGBTQ-identifying older adults wanted to live in a housing project that is marketed as such. Importantly, these works do not specifically focus on inclusion, justice, or similar, but study, for example, the health outcomes (Rosenwohl-Mack et al., 2022) or homemaking practices (Meijering & Lager, 2014) of residents. Nonetheless, these studies seem to confirm that considering how to welcome different people is relevant when developing community-based housing, but that there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Some people might enjoy a housing project explicitly for one group, while others might prefer more anonymity and diversity.

Other research sheds light on discussions around recognitive justice by gaining an in-depth understanding of individual older people's identities and sense of self. Hellström and Sarvimäki (2007) investigated how older adults are valued 'as human beings' in sheltered housing in Sweden, focusing specifically on the experiences of self-determination of 11 participants in 5 different sheltered housing projects. Their findings revealed mostly negative experiences and call for more attention to recognising residents for their individual identities. Research on sheltered housing from an interpretive perspective has also contributed to a better understanding of older adults' sense of self. Gráinne and Foley (2019) studied the sense of home as an essential part of the identity of older adults moving to sheltered housing in Ireland. They found that developing a sense of home after moving to sheltered housing was influenced by many factors, such as personal values, the environment and meaningful occupations. Svidén et al. (2002) investigated the self-image of 59 residents after moving to sheltered housing in Sweden and found that it changed from being independent to becoming a burden.

Despite the wealth of literature on cohousing, to date limited attention has been placed on resident narratives of identity in later life. One example comes from research by López Gómez et al. (2020) who describe two different ways of homemaking in cohousing for older adults in Spain. On the one hand, they have identified that cohousing can place focus on the private familiarity of the home, providing continuity of residents' narratives and sustaining their identities through attachment to objects, people, and places. However, a challenge these communities face is engaging new

residents who might not share the same emotional attachment to these places and people. On the other hand, cohousing can explore new forms of homemaking when people from diverse backgrounds come together and transform their environment instead of preserving it. Again, this work alludes to a tension between living in homogeneity and living with difference. Together, these papers highlight that older residents' identity is an important factor when developing and managing community-based housing for older adults.

Towards a research agenda

Our interpretive approach to reviewing the literature on community-based housing has shown that spatial justice principles are relevant for understanding the impact of such housing provision on older adults. The research literature highlights that community-based housing is often unequally distributed, particularly for cohousing developments. It also shows that participating in shaping one's social and physical surroundings in later life is important in different community-based housing initiatives—not only in cohousing—and that community-based housing is intertwined with the identity of the people living in and moving to such projects. The latter has been addressed more extensively in the context of sheltered housing. Our review also depicted that it falls short to say that one type of housing is 'more just' than another one. Cohousing seems to provide more chances for representative justice, while sheltered housing is generally more accessible to diverse groups (redistributive justice). Notably, most papers do not centre spatial justice principles in their analysis and come from the Global North.

The spatial justice lens not only allows us to see 'what is there' but also what might be missing or what could be further investigated. This section depicts avenues for future research about community-based housing for older adults. We describe this novel research agenda in three points—spatialise, understand processes, and recognise difference (Table 1, column 4). While these three points are separated for the sake of conceptual clarity, they should be seen as interconnected.

Spatialise

Spatial justice ideas based on Soja (2010) urge us to examine housing provision's inherently uneven spatial outcomes and investigate whether these disparities are inconsequential or unjust within a particular local context. Iveson (2011, 258) encapsulates this in an analysis of Soja's and Marcuse's approaches to spatial justice: 'These questions about what the 'right to the city' means simply cannot, indeed should not, be answered in the same way in different times and places'. Much research on sheltered housing and cohousing, however, fails to contextualise these housing

projects. It has not extensively addressed *where* community-based housing projects are being built and developed, how these housing options form part of the local housing offer for diverse older adults as well as how they are embedded in the social configurations of the area. Work on social exclusion in later life highlights that exclusion always happens in a particular space and takes on different meanings in different contexts (Yarker et al., 2024). Further, the structure of national housing systems influences what housing innovations for older adults can emerge in different places (Lux & Sunega, 2014).

Taking a redistributive lens on housing and care could mean studying what resources are used to build certain housing projects and evaluating past decisions of resource allocation. One could ask, for example, why funding is granted for a cohousing project in a particular context but not a sheltered housing project and what effects such a decision has on different groups of older adults. An exception here is the previously cited paper of Robinson et al. (2020), which confirms that in the UK such housing options are often unequally distributed, which leads to an unjust lack of diverse housing options for ageing in economically weaker areas. Future research should see community-based housing as one of many housing options for older adults embedded in a particular local context. To be more specific, research could investigate why developments are located in specific places, how they are connected to care organisations and social configurations in the surrounding area, and why a specific type of housing as opposed to another type was built. Effects of these choices on the lives of minoritised older people living in that area could be analysed. As much as it is important to research who lives in particular housing projects, equally important is to ask: *Where are community-based housing projects located*? *How do community-based housing projects interact with other housing options? And (how) is space more broadly (e.g., a neighbourhood) restructured via the development of a community-based housing project?*

Understand processes

Building on Soja (2013), we have proposed justice as something that needs to be negotiated in the process of producing space, or in other words, by the people and institutions who develop and 'do' housing and space. Among these are older adults, urban planners, governments, designers/architects, grassroots organisations, and many more. Spatial justice arguments, therefore, point towards a process-oriented understanding of community-based housing, in which older adults should have the opportunity to help shape their surroundings and participate, at least to some extent (Buffel et al., 2024). As discussed earlier in this article, research has indeed found that participation is important for older adults in different community-based housing projects. It would be valuable to study the participation of older adults not only in housing managed by its residents but also in more top-down managed housing projects. Additionally, keeping in mind

the structures of disadvantage and advantage that underlie the production of space, a spatial justice lens extends our attention towards the power dynamics among residents of community-based housing. While research has demonstrated the challenges minoritised groups face in accessing community-based housing, it could be further investigated how these groups participate once they are part of such housing. This approach can help go beyond distributional explanations of justice towards studying how the way space is produced can reinforce or challenge inequalities. Future research could ask: *How, where and by whom is community-based housing as a place for ageing produced and 'done' in everyday life? How can different older adults shape their surroundings in differently governed community-based housing projects? How are relations of power among different groups negotiated in the course of producing community-based housing?*

Recognise difference

Struggles for housing justice are embedded in a wider context of structural discriminations such as racism, patriarchy, and heteronormativities (see Chatterjee et al., 2024, p. 3). The older population is highly diverse, and many older people are subject to discrimination. The spatial justice lens developed in this paper highlights that older adults should be acknowledged for who they are and want to be. Following Soja (2010), who builds on the philosopher Iris Marion Young, differences do not need to be eroded to work towards justice. Instead, institutions—such as community-based housing or housing organisations that develop them—that acknowledge that people are different but that do not stereotype and oppress certain groups need to be created. As shown in this paper, literature has hinted at the notion that recognising identities is important in later life and is connected to places, such as community-based housing. A community of people with similar backgrounds can be beneficial for wellbeing in community-based housing and a community might be easier to establish with people at a similar life stage. A spatial justice lens highlights that housing projects focusing on specific minoritised groups can contribute to a recognition of difference and form part of a just housing system for older adults. However, developing projects exclusively for one specific identity group can also reinforce that group as minoritised and lead to processes of 'othering' and essentialising (Fraser et al., 2004; Knijn et al., 2020, p. 70).

Recognising difference goes beyond merely discussing who community-based housing projects should serve. Drawing on recognitive justice principles developed by Fraser (1995), we need to understand how institutions construct difference and how that results in unequal status. Explicitly studying these processes in the context of ageing and housing could be a central area of inquiry. Similar arguments have been made by Stanley (2009), who argues that we should not study identity/diversity, but rather the processes through which difference is produced. This also

means to study how space can be created that honours identities without essentialising them while at the same time providing spaces for encounter, conviviality, and change. There is a balance to be found between providing spaces for different people to meet (Fincher, 2008; Maununaho et al., 2023; Wessendorf, 2014) and recognising that underlying these encounters are social hierarchies that might require designated spaces for a specific group (Stoisser & van Gent, 2025; Valentine, 2008). Research could ask: *How do older residents feel recognised in their identities in community-based housing? How are older adults' sense of selves shaped by a move into age-segregated community-based housing?* But also, *how do community-based housing projects construct the identities of older adults? How is difference produced among older residents in community-based housing projects? How are tensions between sustaining sense of selves and enabling opportunities for change or encountering those who are different negotiated in community-based housing projects?* The latter questions focus on understanding space, processes *and* difference and therefore combine the different elements of the proposed research agenda.

Conclusion

In this paper, we used an interpretive approach to review the literature on community-based housing from a spatial justice perspective. We presented literature on community-based housing with regard to redistributive, representative, and recognitive justice. Based on this critical review, we identified three avenues for further research: seeing community-based housing as embedded in a local context, understanding community-based housing from a processual perspective, and investigating how difference is recognised and reproduced by community-based housing.

Overarching this research agenda lies a call for more research on community-based housing in general—specifically, community-based housing for minoritised older adults. Despite the widespread focus on ageing at home in many countries, a diverse housing offer for older adults that recognises their differences and works towards creating equal status for different older adults seems crucial to contribute to just ageing. Further, a spatial justice approach encourages reflections on what constitutes good and just housing and ageing in various contexts and how it can be realised, given the complex practices and competing interests surrounding ageing, care, and place. Calls for ageing and housing justice extend far beyond community-based housing. Community-based housing encompasses various housing types for older people. Still, the options of ageing in one's own private home, ageing in an institutional care facility or other housing projects also need to be considered when thinking about just housing and ageing. Thinking broader than community-based housing for older adults also means questioning whether age-segregated housing is at all a just way of housing when ageing. Reflections on this could be centred in further theoretical work. Lastly, while this paper concentrates

on older adults—a diverse but specific group facing housing challenges—it is crucial to recognise that their struggles are interconnected with a broader movement advocating for the right to adequate housing. Addressing housing justice for older adults must be part of a larger effort to ensure equitable housing for all.

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