

HOUSE research: Innovating housing for older adults and subjective wellbeing

Housing LIN HAPPI hour – Sept. 22

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HOUSE research project



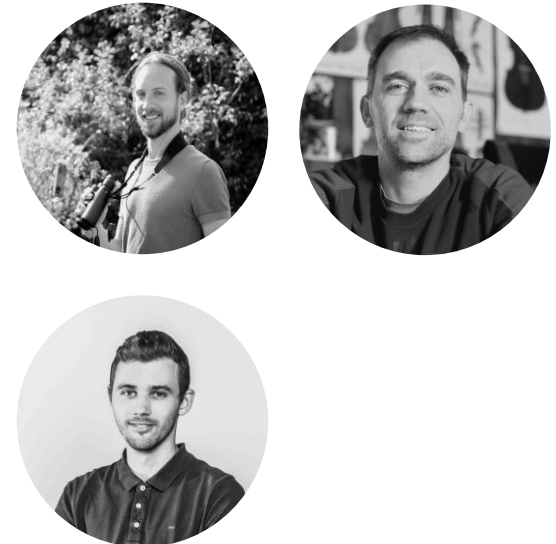
**ArcK –
Designing for More**



**Society and Ageing Research
Lab (SARLab)**



Smart ICT



+ advisory committee of 30+ societal actors

The HOUSE project investigates the impact of housing on the subjective wellbeing of current and future generations of older adults.

Ageing in place



Ageing **well** in the **right** place



Research Questions



How can heterogeneity among older adults be identified and described for practical use?

Objectives

Identify heterogeneity among older adults

Valorisation



Development of housing profiles (personas)



How can innovative housing concepts and features contribute to the subjective wellbeing of older adults?

Gain insight into innovative housing concepts and features and their link to subjective wellbeing



Screening tool
'Housing Wellbeing Indicator': insight into current & future living environments



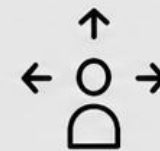
Can a measurement instrument "housing for subjective wellbeing of older adults" be implemented, tested and validated?

Test and validate a housing measurement instrument for subjective wellbeing



Which spatial scenarios / design drivers can stimulate the design of innovative housing for the subjective wellbeing of older adults?

Design and evaluate spatial scenarios / design drivers



HOUSE toolbox & 5 design drivers

Dissemination

Policy, practice and research on ageing and housing

→ Focus on objective housing characteristics: accessibility, safety, energy efficiency

- Stairs inside the home, door widths, thresholds, etc.

→ What about older adults' subjective housing experiences?

- Do I feel good here? Do I have control? Do I feel connected?

16% of homes in Flanders
are adapted for people with
reduced mobility

The diagram consists of two large, opposing arrows pointing towards each other, creating a central gap. The left arrow is dark blue and points right. The right arrow is red and points left. The text is placed inside these arrows. The overall message is that while some homes are adapted, most older adults still do not feel their homes are suitable for comfortable ageing.

(de Smalen & Van den Broeck, 2025)

80% of adults aged 60+
consider their home suitable
for ageing comfortably

(KBS, 2026)



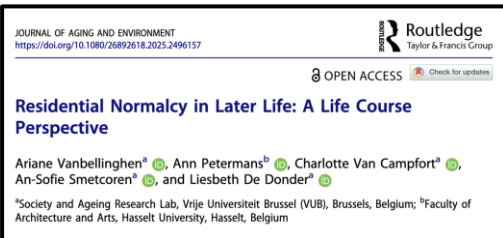


Systematic review of the role of housing characteristics on older adults' wellbeing

Analyses 74 housing stories

Survey HOUSE pilot study (N=240)

HOUSE Selfscan for older adults
to reflect on their own situation,
but also for researchers and policymakers



MY HOUSING WELLBEING



Aspects covered in the survey:

- Housing satisfaction
- Basic housing quality
- Use of space
- Housing technologies
- Housing preferences
- Neighbourhood



MY PERSONAL WELLBEING



- Health
- Feelings



MY HOUSING FUTURE



- Ready for the future?
- Open to other housing scenarios
- Willingness to share



Ageing population

Growing heterogeneity



Life expectancy and health
Migration
Changing family structures

Different housing needs and wishes



Ageing population

Growing heterogeneity

↑
Life expectancy and health
Migration
Changing family structures

Different housing needs and wishes

Heterogeneity is unsufficiently reflected in the range of housing options for the Flemish housing stock

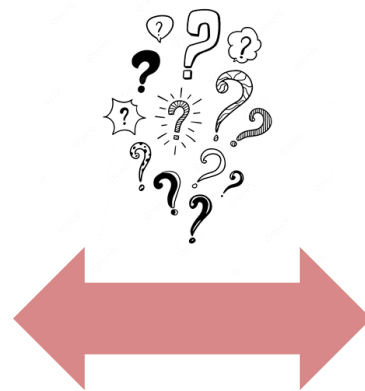


Why?

- Clear definitions and regulations for innovative housing options are still lacking in Flanders.
- Many Flemish older adults are insufficiently informed about different housing options available.



Single family house
Apartment



Residential care facility



Taxonomy of Individual and Collective Housing Options



www.HOUSE-research.be

May 2025

TAXONOMY HOUSING OPTIONS			SPATIAL SHARING				
			I	II	III	IV	V
minimum private			all living spaces	all living spaces	all living spaces	all living spaces	bedroom(s) (+ poss. bathroom)
minimum shared			no	circulation (eg. entrance, stairwell) (+ poss. parking, bicycle shed, storage)	group II + a space that is not a living space (eg. garden, laundry room...)	group III + living spaces (eg. kitchen, dining room...)	group IV + all living spaces + (poss.) bathroom
SOCIAL SHARING	LIMITED SHARING	A no explicit social sharing	I - A single-family house	II - A apartment	III - A	IV - A assistive living	V - A residential care centre
		B engagement for shared social activities	I - B caring neighbourhood	II - B accessory dwelling unit	III - B	IV - B	V - B hospita dwelling
		C group B + shared self-management	I - C	II - C secondary dwelling	III - C co-living	IV - C cohousing	V - C shared housing
	EXTENSIVE SHARING		...	...	...	...	...
			...	...	...	...	...
			...	...	...	...	...

REFERENCE:
HOUSE research. (2025, May).
Taxonomy of individual and collective housing options.
<https://www.house-research.be/nl/publications>

LEGENDE

- engagement for interaction
- Shared spaces
- Adapted, accessible unit

Taxonomy of Individual and Collective Housing Options



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May 2025

TAXONOMY HOUSING OPTIONS			SPATIAL SHARING				
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	B engagement for shared social activities	I - B caring neighbourhood	II - B accessory dwelling unit	III - B 	IV - B hospita dwelling	V - B hospita dwelling	V - B hospita dwelling
	EXTENSIVE SHARING	C group B + shared self-management	I - C secondary dwelling	II - C co-living	III - C senior co-living	IV - C cohousing	V - C shared housing
			...	...	...	...	...

Almost 1 in 4
older adults
are
interested

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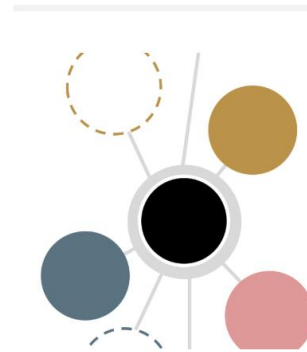
	Context	4
	Reading guide	6
	DD1. Space for the diversity of older people 'Thé older person' does not exist. Every older person is unique, with their own housing wishes and needs.	7
	DD2. Space for change Growing along with changing spatial needs and the body over time.	10
	DD3. Space for memories Connecting memories to the home and to the future housing wishes of older adults.	15
	DD4. Space for independence & routines Living that supports independence and preserves familiar routines.	22
	DD5. Space for connection Living interwoven with the social fabric of the neighborhood.	28



Other HOUSE output...



Persona set



Toolzoeker

Ontdek welke tools er vandaag al bestaan rond wonen, ouderen en welbevinden.

[Toolzoeker gebruiken](#) →



Woontest

Test: Welke woonvorm past bij jou?

[Woontest afnemen](#) →



Toolbox en ontwerp gids

Ontdek diverse instrumenten en design drivers om te gaan ontwerpen voor het woonwelbevinden van ouderen.

[Bekijk toolbox](#) →

Scientific publications

Lambrix, S., Vekemans, T., Vanrie, J., Smetcoren, A.-S., & Petermans, A. (2025) [Village Living: Exploring Local Design Futures of Intergenerational Housing in a Belgian Village](#) Journal of Architecture and Urban Design, 2(1), 118-145.

Vanbellinghen, A.; Petermans, A.; Van Campfort, C.; Smetcoren, A. S.; De Donder, L. (2025) [Residential Normalcy in Later Life: A Life Course Perspective](#) Journal of Aging and Environment, 1-22.

Ielegems, E.; Smetcoren, A.-S.; Lambrix, S.; Petermans, A. (2024) [Through the eyes of architects: Challenges in designing collective housing projects for wellbeing and innovation. Paper presented at ARCH24 'Effects of Design on Health and Wellbeing', Helsinki.](#)

Vanbellinghen, A.; Severens, E.; Petermans, A.; De Donder, L.; Smetcoren, A.-S. (2024) [En toen viel het kaartenhuis ineen": inzichten uit woonpaden van financieel kwetsbare ouderen](#). In J. Coene, H. Degerickx, C. Dewilde, T. Ghys, B. Hubeau, S. Marchal, R. Remmen, & W. Vandenhoele (Eds.), Armoede en Ongelijkheid: Jaarboek 2024 (pp. 229-245). Acco.

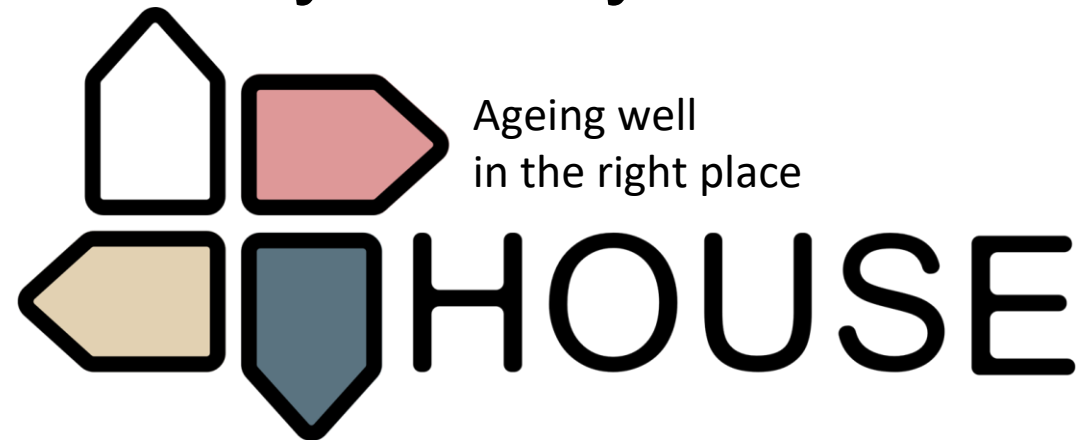
Lambrix, S., Petermans, A.; Smetcoren, A.-S.; Vanrie, J. (2024) [Towards a residential socio-physical framework: positioning subjective experiences in physical environments](#), Architecture_MPS 28, 1: 5. [DOI](#)

Clerix, M.; Lambrix, S.; Vanrie, J.; Smetcoren, A.-S.; Petermans, A. (2023) [A share-based categorization of housing options for diversifying cities. Paper presented at AMPS 'Livable Cities', NY.](#)





Thank you for your attention!



Much more on www.HOUSE-research.be 😊

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Three key insights from HOUSE

- 1. Subjective wellbeing is central to how older adults experience and evaluate housing. Objective and subjective housing characteristics are intertwined and both need attention.**
- 2. We need a wider range of housing options, but many structural barriers still stand in the way. At the same time, there are opportunities that remain largely unexplored.**
- 3. Designing for older adults' subjective wellbeing requires a creative, human-centred approach taking into account five design drivers throughout the design process.**

