
POSTER ABSTRACT

Sustainable Inclusive Living: Making Neighborhoods "Care-Proof"

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A person's care or support needs shouldn't have to lead to a loss of integration and participation in society. By making neighborhoods "care-proof", we ensure more continuity of living and inclusion for people with high care needs.

The city of Leuven decided in 2021 to use the domain of a former school – "De Boomgaard" – for a collective living project with social motive. Livez, a cooperation of professional residential care and home care providers (people with disabilities, elderly, families with young children), took on this challenge enthusiastically.

The project uses the following principles of care:

- Integration and participation: care from, by and to the neighborhood
- Between autonomy and security: infrastructure that facilitates soft transitions between autonomous living and supported secure living
- Quality of relationships: a strong social network that transcends the local residents' care needs
- Solidarity: broad accessibility and diversity through social and financial solidarity
- Medical excellence: no compromises on the quality of care

Infrastructure is based on the principles of "universal design", meaning it should adapt to the changing needs of different residents and not the other way around. The goal is to create cosy and comfortable housing, accessible for people with above-average care needs. Housing units are not restricted to use by one type of resident (elderly, physical disability...), but allow for customization when a specific housing need arises. The final design will be decided in January of 2023, so that the first occupation of the housing will be available in 2026 for minimally 12 people with high care needs.

The founding members of the cooperation will ensure continuity and quality of care with specialized expertise. However, the cooperative model is not limited to these actors. Local residents are invited from the beginning to participate. This process is in full swing. Neighborhood meetings in 2022 showed positive engagement, great feedback and ideas. Hand in hand with this goes an active exploration of collaborations with health care providers in the neighborhood (pharmacist, physiotherapist, G.P., dentist, psychologist...).

This means a much needed shift from care on the basis of a pathology to person-centered care, on the understanding that the person is inherently part of a community. The overall aim of the project is not to create an offer of care that local residents can apply for, but to make the neighborhood itself care-proof so that it can absorb a higher amount of support and care needs from its residents. To measure this, a scientific committee is developing the "Hospiscore", by analogy with the Flemish concept of the "Mobiscore" (regarding mobility and proximity to important services). The higher the Hospiscore, the more care-proof a neighborhood is, the more diverse and complex the care needs are that they can cater to locally, thus assuring a greater continuity of living for its residents. We strongly believe in the added value of this concept, not only for the city of Leuven, but for every city and neighborhood that aims for a humane, hospitable and inclusive dynamic.