Ageing and Senior Cohousing: the Capability Approach Perspective.

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Abstract

This study would contribute to broaden the debate on the opportunities that the ageing in cohousing offers, examining the capabilities elder maintains and maximises. The base line assumption is represented by the Capability Approach of Amartya Sen and Martha Craven Nussbaum: after identifying the fundamental rights of the elderly, the available resources and the resulting functionings are classified. Hence, a questionnaire has been designed in order to detect the capabilities of the cohousing residents.
The main expected results are that the elders preserve easily the ability to live according the life-style that they "have reason to value", beyond the evidence that this housing model is chosen for economic reason (low income and/or house not owned) and for social reason (weakness of the family care network and/or weakness of social services; a lack of freedom in mobility and in finding cultural centres).

Keywords: Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach, Ageing, Cohousing Model.

INTRODUCTION

The housing issue is crucial in defining social policies, particularly when it refers to the wider meaning of the term *dwell*. This is, indeed, a complex phenomenon that affects not only *home* but also urban space where social relations are produced and exerted, and personalities are expressed. The right to adequate housing and to the city characterise the current rethinking of urban policies. Institutions reconsider the value of urban spaces as stage of reciprocal actions in order to facing the emergency shelter in a social fabric matrix made by anonymous collective rituals.

Several studies on housing policy conducted in Italy and in Europe have observed a profound transformation of the "contemporary desire of dwelling" the city (Ferrini, 2014). Solidarity and reciprocity are at the base of the new housing solutions: sharing practices as cohousing reconnect the domestic space to the public one, which regains its value and its proper social function. In the last few years, cohousing is becoming a significant matter of study for this reason: «a particular form of neighbourhood in which private housing and shared services are combined to protect everyone's privacy and as well as the need for sociability providing an efficient response to some practical issue of living the city» (Lieaert 2007).

Furthermore, the available studies describe the increasing problem for the elderly population to dwell the house and the city, due to the weakening of family care network and to the lack of adequate public services. Hence, it could be interesting to adopt the perspective of the elderly population in order to properly analyse the meaning of the house as a home, «the place of the dearest ties, memories, ultimate synthesis of the past, support for the future» (Sgritta, Deriu 2011), but too often place of isolation.

The international literature notes that the living model of senior cohousing gives an efficient and effective response to the weaknesses of both residential structure and private home, maintaining and/or maximizing the functional capabilities of the elderly. Case studies describing the European and American experiences show two models of cohousing. The voluntary cohabitation (people participate in design, implementation and management of the housing complex) chosen by a segment of older population that has economic security but a fragile family care network. For that reason, cohousing becomes an investment in a future made out of empowerment and social inclusion. The

cohabitation proposed by institutions as a central policy for health and well-being in order to enhance the elderly support policy for the fragile segment of older population (Brenton 2013). Consequently, cohousing seems to protect the value of relationships and would be an appropriate model to reconceptualization of "old age", as a stage of life in which person must be recognise as an active citizen, as well as Peter Laslett hoped (Mirabile 2011).

Sociological research in this field examines characters, relationships, and implications that residence for the elderly have on the society. Moreover, the cohousing experience has a very recent history in Italy. Therefore, the present study aims to analyse the well-being of elders, who have decided to live in a cohousing, and the benefits of which public policies enjoy in harmonizing housing policy and welfare/social security one.

METHODOLOGY

The standpoint is Sen's Capability Approach as developed by Martha Craven Nussbaum: «as a theory of fundamental political entitlements, my version of the approach also employs a specific list of the *Central Capabilities* […] that a decent political order must secure to all citizens» (Nussbaum 2011, p.19).

The *Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing* (April, 2002) has identified five basic entitlements: independence, participation, assistance, self-fulfilment, and dignity. Hence, each area has been described according the key question "*what is a person able to do and to be?*" and connected to Nussbaum's list of Central Capabilities.

In the wake of some studies about the Capability Approach for evaluating public health interventions and healthy residential environments for the elderly (Lloyd-Sherlock 2002, Lorgelly et al. 2008, Blečić et al. 2013), a qualitative interview has been designed in order to investigate:

> how much the capabilities concerning the five basic entitlements for elders are guaranteed in a cohousing experience, beyond the evidence that this housing model is preferred for economic reason (low income and/or house not owned) and for social reason (weakness of the family care network and/or weakness of social services;a lack of freedom in mobility and in finding cultural centres).

The research method chosen is the case study. Despite the disadvantage recognised by a part of literature, little basis for scientific generalisation, this method explains in-depth the process and outcome of the phenomenon of cohousing for the elderly (Bailey 2006). Further motivations are:

- In Italy cohousing is still in an experimental phase, particularly the senior cohousing;

- The standpoint adopted is the Capability Approach: the elderly cannot simply classified as a uniform fragile bracket of the population, but they have different life experiences, heterogeneous needs, and heterogeneous capabilities.

This study deals with the complex topic of well-being in the *habitat* for elders, certainly some conclusions could appear to strengthen; nevertheless it is interesting to observe how the case investigated could be considered as a best practice by national and local policies to reform the housing for the elderly normative.

1. AGEING AND CAPABILITIES

In the current structural crisis, the ageing has become a crucial issue in the political agenda of each country. According to the World Bank «Today, as the world's population ages, old age security systems are in trouble worldwide. Informal community and family-based arrangements are weakening. And formal programs are beset by escalating costs that require high tax rates and deter private sector growth-while failing to protect the old […] The world is approaching an old age crisis» (World Bank 1994, quote in Lloyd-Sherlock 2002).

HelpAge International reveals «For the past fifty years, economic growth and increased productivity have been the goal of development policy. The elderly , on the other hand, are usually thought of as economically dependent and passive. As a result, they have been treated at best as irrelevant to development, and at worst, as hampering the prospects for prosperity» (HelpAge International Report 2000, p.3).

Many elders contribute to well-being of their families and communities, nonetheless they are stereotyped as passive or helpless (Gorman 2000). Thus, in the last few years, scholars and policy makers have become to define a new idea of "old age" in order to incorporate the issue into a broader social strategies and to avoid a collapse of the welfare systems. The starting point of the new definition has been the awareness that the ageing is a biological process with its own dynamic. The improvements in the quality of life could give the possibility to consider the elderly beyond the categories of vulnerability and dependency.

The new perspective takes roots since the studies of Peter Laslett who has deeply analysed the demographic changing under a multidisciplinary aspects, pointing out the weakness of the welfare system in the long run. He has invited to consider the "third age" as a stage of life during which people maintain the participative role in the society (Mirabile 2011). Therefore, welfare policies should rethink the resources available and organise them in order to increase opportunities for elders to make contributions in the society. The Capability Approach could be recognised as the viewpoint more adequate to «appreciate later life as a fluid, complex and heterogeneous phenomenon» (Lloyd-Sherlock 2002, p.1165).

1.1 *The Capability Approach*

Amartya Sen has developed this approach to welfare economics focusing on capabilities rather than utility and resources. The utilitarian approach cannot assess people's actual interests and urgent needs because its analysis on *individual utility* expresses psychological states (happiness, desire-fulfilment and pleasure) and not real deprivation. Resources contribute to build a *good life* if they are considered not *per se* but in relationship with individual's ability to convert them into valuable outcomes (Sen 2005). Thus, commodities, wealth, and utility are incomplete tools of analysis to examine how well a life is going (Sen 1990, HDCA 2009).

Hence, Sen has argued the need to move from traditional paradigm of well-being policy to new approach that draws attention on *the quality of life a person is actually able to achieve*. The core concepts of Sen's theory about equity of opportunities are functionings and capability.

Functionings are states of "being and doing" such as being well-nourished and having a shelter: «A functioning is an achievement of a person: what he or she manages to do or to be, and any such functionings reflects, as it were, a part of the state of that person» (Sen 1989 quoted in HDCA 2009).

Capability is «the various combinations of functionings (beings and doings) that the person can achieve [...] is, thus, a set of vectors of functionings, reflecting the person's freedom to lead one type of life or another […] to choose from possible livings» (Sen quoted in HDCA summary by Alkire 2005).

The capability becomes therefore the new paradigm through which rethinking and reorganising welfare policy: the aim is to assure to all citizens the *freedom* to choose among different kinds of life that have reason to value. Many scholars has applied this approach across political, economic, and cultural borders both operationalising the evaluative dimension of capabilities (the assessment of quality of life, well-being and human development) and pointing out the importance of the concept to improve social justice.

Martha C. Nussbaum has presented the most systematic and extensive capability theory, identifying a list of *Central Human Capabilities* which constitutes the threshold for any governments that want guarantee human dignity. Her analysis begins with a consideration: «Instead of asking about people's satisfactions, or how much in the way of resources they are able to command, we ask, instead, about what they are actually able to do or to be» (quoted in Lorgelly et al. 2008, Nussbaum 2011).

1.2 *Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach and Elderly*

Nussbaum's approach seems to be a good framework where the elderly welfare policy could progress (HDCA 2009, Lloyd-Sherlock 2002, Pirhonen 2015). Lloyd-Sherlock in the paper "*Nussbaum, Capabilities and Older People*" argues how relevant Nussbaum's approach is in reconceptualising the current *dependency policies* for the elderly (pensions, nursing homes, etc.), because it «contains an important tension between agency and structure issues» (p.1172). Indeed, Nussbaum defines capabilities as a complex of «abilities residing inside a person […] freedoms or opportunities created by a combination of personal abilities and the political, social, and economic environments» (Nussbaum 2011, p.20).

Therefore, capability is more than ability to function, it is «a multidimensional concept […] entails the dimensions of desire, ability, means and access» (Pirhonen 2015, p.31). This evidence appears in adopting the Capabilities Approach to analyse the residential environments for the elderly, where elders spent the most of their time. Working on "*what individuals can do, not what they actually do*" becomes crucial, above all if individuals are older and the policy makers are not able to invest resources in empowerment and social inclusion of elders.

The following scheme illustrates the ten Central Capabilities and their implementation in housing for elders, particularly in senior cohousing:

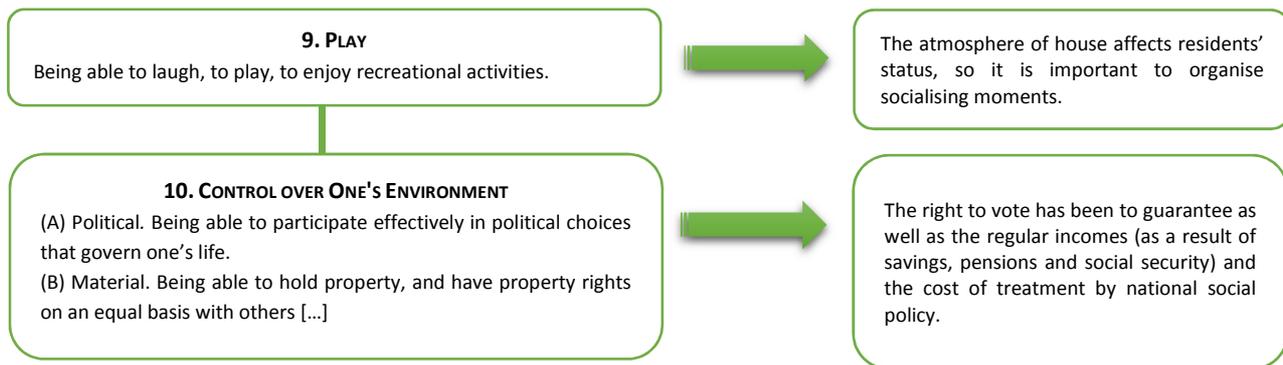| Nussbaum's list of Central Capabilities	Pirhonen's viewpoint re-examined
1. LIFE Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.	It could assume that in cohousing residents have already lived *a life of normal length*, therefore the attention should be focused on what is the meaning of a life *worth living*, maybe the offer of structural factors trough which use capabilities and achieve functionings.
2. BODILY HEALTH Being able to have a good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.	Senior cohousing has to be lived as home, so freely, but it is important to assure specific treatment for each resident.
3. BODILY INTEGRITY Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault; including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.	In cohousing for elderly, subsidised transportation has to offer and the place should be endowed with security system. Moreover sense of security and trust has to build and strengthen.
4. SENSES, IMAGINATION AND THOUGHT Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think and reason [...] in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasant experiences and avoid non beneficial pain.	It is important to encourage residents to participate in activities that could stimulate sense, imagination and thought, because older people are resources.
5. EMOTIONS Being able to have attachments to things and people ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude and just anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety.	Emotions could be maintained and experienced if cohousing becomes home, i.e. an emotional space.
6. PRACTICAL REASON Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflect about the planning of one's life.	This capability reveals the crucial role of information for older people which could choose consciously how to live.
7. AFFILIATION (A)Being able to live with and towards others [...] to be able to imagine the situation of another. (B)Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others.	According Pirhonen, this capability could be considered as an adequate bond amongst desire, ability, means, and access; an example is the desire to stay with others, the ability to join them, the proper space (means) to socialise, and the easy access to that place.
8. OTHER SPECIES Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.	The access to gardens, especially in urban areas, as well as taking care of plants and pets should be effortless.

| 9. PLAY — Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities. | → | The atmosphere of house affects residents' status, so it is important to organise socialising moments. |
| 10. CONTROL OVER ONE'S ENVIRONMENT — (A) Political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life. (B) Material. Being able to hold property, and have property rights on an equal basis with others […] | → | The right to vote has been to guarantee as well as the regular incomes (as a result of savings, pensions and social security) and the cost of treatment by national social policy. |

The Capabilities Approach aims to pursue *the good life* for everyone securing dignity: « […] acts as a buffer between individual persons and care systems because it focuses on offering people opportunities, not obbligations» (Pirhonen 2015, p.36).

2. AGEING AND COHOUSING

A vast literature has already examined the ageing population trend of Italy as well as its economic and political implications (Istat 2015, Eurostat 2015, EnableAge Project 2004). Nevertheless it is important to briefly address the actual demographic context before analysing the issue concerning cohousing as an alternative housing model for the elderly.

In Italy, the well-known *demographic winter* has begun from the 70s of the 20th century as the increasing ageing index reveals: 46.1% in 1971, 96.6% in 1991, and 148.7% in 2011 (Istat serie storiche 1861-2011). Moreover, in 2013, life expectancy at birth has grown until 79.8 years for men and 84.6 years for women (Istat 2015). There are, however, several factors that define ageing a considerable socio-economic issue to deal with:
- The low fertility rate that causes a decrease of future population on which elders will weight;
- The geographical mobility of workers and the consequent fragmentation of family;
- The entry into labour market of woman who is the first care-giver of the family;
- Finally, the rethinking of balance between work and care time (Granaglia 2011; Istat 2014).

The continual improvement of health and longevity go along with chronic degeneration diseases; this provokes a ripple in national welfare system, unable to manage diverse needs because of a decrease of public expenditure (Pavolini and Ranci 2011, Ugolini 2012, Thomson et al. 2014). At present, care encompasses a range of services aimed to secure health and well-being, taking in to consideration the multidimensional demand of long-term care: «a range of services required by persons with a reduced degree of functional capacity, physical or cognitive, and who are consequently dependent for an extended period of time on help with basic activities of daily living» (OECD 2015).

The modern society, according to Thomas and Blanchard, shows an important paradox: on the one hand, it provides stability and services that enable many people to grow old and in good health, on the other hand, it denies elders a suitable role in the society (Thomas and Blanchard 2009). This is the same concern expressed by Italian National Bioethics Committee in 2006. The document "*Bioetica e diritti degli anziani*" pays attention to recognize older person as owner of entitlements and obligations; he/she has to feel free to improve and express his/her capabilities and society must facilitate and promote policies that assure dignity in ageing (Conclusion). Actually, it is necessary to change the vision of ageing from a cost for the society to a natural phase of life that *lies beyond adulthood*. Hence, the transformation of demographic structure has to evaluate as a simple social process and not a social illness. Elders are not more beneficiaries but supporters of healthcare and

welfare system because they invest on their social capital. Therefore, Italian government will move from passive to active care strategy in order to not owe future generations in terms of social security (Istat 2014, Unece 2015).

A first goal is making suitable and comfortable the habitat where older person passes most of the time: house. House is becoming a shelter place where elders protect themselves against fast and chaotic rhythms of urban centres, at the same time house is the place where sense of disorientation, loneliness, and exclusion comes over them (Roosma et al. 2014, Sgritta and Deriu 2011). It could start to rethink housing policy for the elderly looking at cohousing as an adequate alternative to retirement and sheltered houses.

Ageing in place and *ageing in community* characterise the housing models for the elderly.
The ageing in place model could be the example of the paradox cited by Thomas and Blanchard; actually, it deprives elders of a fundamental aspect of a person that is the relation and it increases the sense of loneliness. Nevertheless, the inclination to institutionalise this model is strong so much that also United Nations promote it in *The Political Declaration and Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing* (point 98). The moving in other buildings is considered as eradicating person from secure and familiar habitat. This model, however, evidences an increasing public expenditure for home care services.
On the contrary, the ageing in community model seems to safeguard the well-being of elders, to promote relations and reciprocity: it is reveals an ancient and ontological truth that is «man is by nature a social animal» even when he/she is old.
Cohousing is an expression of *ageing in community* and it can represent the ideal place, the ideal home where each older person does be a social capital, does have capabilities (Ruiu 2014, 2016).

2.1 Cohousing model

Scholars agree to identify the cohousing roots in Denmark where in the 60s two articles led public opinion to reflect on the urban realities: "*Children Should Have One Hundred Parents*" by Bodil Graae (1967) and "*The Missing Link between Utopia and the Dated One-Family House*" by Joan Gødman Høyer (1968). The two articles focus on the role of condominium in the chaotic rhythms of the cities. Condominium plays an important role to enhance isolation and alienation because each apartment is experienced as a shelter place where it is possible to feel free but also to protect himself/herself from the other. In this context, people lose the capacity to share and to have deeply relations (Bamford 2005, Sargisson 2010).

Following this consideration, the architect Gødman Høyer designed a building with private spaces and common ones to improve the values of reciprocity and mutual aid. The housing model remains into the cities because its real scope is to recreate relational ties between private, common and public areas. Actually, by the end of 1973, the two communities, Saettedammen and Skråplanet, had completed their construction near Copenhagen.

By the 70s the cohousing has had a rapid expansion in North Europe (Sweden and the Netherlands), in the United Kingdom, and by 90s in the United States thanks to the studies of Katie McCamant and Chuck Durrett. The features of the model can be summed up by Durrett's definition as reported in Oxford Dictionaries: «a balance of privacy and community, a safe and supportive environment for children, a practical and spontaneous lifestyle, intergenerational neighbourhoods, environmentally-sensitive design emphasizing pedestrian access and optimizing open space, neighbourhood design, and private homes supplemented by extensive common facilities» (Oxford Dictionaries, quote 1988). However, literature about cohousing emphasises different characteristics. Dorit Fromm focuses on

decision-making process to manage the residency and the right dimension of a cohousing (Fromm 1991, 2006); McCamant and Durrett highlight the «balance of privacy and community, a safe and supportive environment […]» (http://www.mccamant-durrett.com/characteristics.cfm); Martin Field underlines the internal social dynamics, the sense of belonging to a community and the critical consensus process (Field 2004).

To sum up, cohousing develops spaces in order to facilitate social interactions, producing a strong sentiment of belonging to a neighbourhood, of civic responsibility and social participation (Bamford 2005):
- *Inclusion*
- *Participation*
- *Reciprocity*
- *Sustainability*
- *Well-being*

2.2 *Social value of cohousing*

Cohousing is a model that easily meets future needs of inhabitants because it is thought by and for residents not for housing market (McCamant and Durrett 2003, Enable Age 2005). Ageing phenomenon gives the chance to test how this model could help in the transition from passive healthcare system to active one; how it could be an adequate alternative to sheltered and retirement houses; above all, how it could be a suitable answer for successful ageing.

Thus, taking into consideration *Senior Cohousing*, it is interesting to note that case studies analysed until now reach same conclusions: cohousing is a considerable solution for public healthcare system. It does not replace family, on the contrary, it is a start point to enhance bonds with neighbours; elders live in a safe and secure place where mutual aid is guaranteed, exactly because they are able to support each other (Enable-Age 2005; Andersson 2011; Brenton 2008; Stone 2013). Senior cohousing was born in Sweden when a group of young old (50-65 year old) realized that the adage «a close neighbour is better than a distant brother» does well express their future (Sgritta, Deriu 2011; Brenton 2008).They established the Färdknäppen (1987-1989) planning spaces in order to simplify mobility, create social interactions, and to avoid loneliness. Chuck Durrett highlights the increasingly importance for elders, comparing two experiences: on the one hand, an American 70 year-old woman who has been living alone and far from her friends, on the other hand, a Danish 71 year-old woman who is not alone and has a close group of friends because she has been living in a cohousing (Durrett 2009).

Maria Brenton deeply analyses the characteristics of senior cohousing and she observes the personal and social benefits:
- Community and independence can be a positive investment for a successful ageing. Cohousing respects the concept of older person as active citizen because it enhances autonomy and sense of well-being engaging them in several activities;
- Encouraging social capital is another feature. The elderly goes beyond stereotype and becomes meaningful support to others thanks to knowledge and expertise (Brenton 2008, 2013).

Nevertheless, Brenton has noted there are few research studies that compared senior cohousing residents' life to elders living in ordinary houses, therefore the benefits of the model remains to demonstrate throughout empirical analyses.

3. *CASE STUDY. CASA ALLA VELA, A BEST PRACTICE OF ITALIAN SENIOR COHOUSING.*

On the wave of the research by Cinzia Boniatti and Enrico Bramerini (2014) about the first Italian senior cohousing – *Casa alla Vela* in Trento – this case study aims at proving how this habitat could meet needs of residents and furthermore maintain capabilities.

The standpoint is Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach in order to analyse how much the capabilities concerning the five basic entitlements for elders (independence, participation, assistance, self-fulfilment, and dignity) are guaranteed in a cohousing experience. The case study has been chosen as appropriate method for two reason:

- *Casa alla Vela* is a small reality inhabited since 2014;
- The elderly cannot simply classified as a uniform fragile bracket of the population, to analyse capabilities is necessary to a deep analysis for each person.

The other experiences classified as senior cohousing (Cohousing del Moro, Lucca; Fondazione Opera Immacolata Concezione Onlus, Padova; Cohousing il mucchio, Bologna) do not answer to the first e-mail contact, thus the study is incomplete, but during next months meetings for the interviews will be established.

Casa alla Vela opens the doors in 2014 to five self-sufficient 90 year-old women and seven students of Trento University. According to the study "*Senior Cohousing and Welfare Mix. A Case Study from Trento on the Social Innovation for Active Ageing*", this cohousing meets all the characteristics of cohousing architectonic structure:
- private and common spaces;
- mutual aid and reciprocity;
- economic sustainability;
- shared responsibility in managing the house;
- care-givers support.

Furthermore, Boniatti and Bramerini's research examines how *Casa alla Vela* could become a real expression of the Second Welfare in housing policies. Actually it shows two principal characteristics: the social dimension of housing process, and more important the private-public partnership, aimed at supporting housing policy under an economic vision of reciprocity, not under a market oriented vision.

Hence, the present case-study would broaden the analysis and reveal whether cohousing could be an adequate model for a successful ageing. Nussbaum's list of the Central Capabilities is the matrix from which the study starts. By the comparison between Nussbaum's approach and the Madrid International Action Plan entitlements (independence, participation, assistance, self-fulfilment, and dignity) a qualitative semi-structured interview has been design. All the residents have been interviewed individually in a private and comfortable room. After that, a field observation of the house has been conducted in order to evaluate structural factors useful to active internal capabilities and so functionings.

The peculiarities of this cohousing are the age of the residents and the structure that has been conceived and realised on their needs. *Casa alla Vela* was born from a top-down process managed by the social cooperative SAD, specialised in assistance services (home and health care). The experience is a best practice (UNECE 2015) and it helps to understand that it is possible to create a valid alternative to the classical housing solutions for the old-old (over age 85), without creating a shock due to the move.

Following, it will argue each of Nussbaum's ten capabilities applied both to cohousing building and to residents' experience.

Life
 « Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living» (Nussbaum 2011, p.33).
The residents of *Casa alla Vela* are 90 year-old people self-sufficient just with a reduced degree of mobility due to the age. Therefore the attention is focused on the second part of the statement: what is the meaning of a life worth living, maybe offering structural factors that simplify the implementation of capabilities.
The cohousing structure in Trento meets all standards of safe and security, the private and common space as well as furniture are conceived to adapt space to changing needs, moreover two family assistants are always in the house to supervise and to assure first aid in case of necessity. This security is perceived by the older women that affirm they feel secure to move and to ask help if necessary.

Bodily Health
«Being able to have a good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter» (Nussbaum 2011, p.33).
Referring to a senior cohousing, it is important to guarantee specific health treatment for each resident and to make house comfortable as a home in order to prevent depression and sense of refuse. In *Casa alla Vela* an accurate attention is posed on residents: every week a doctor goes to visit the women and in case of hospitalization, as it happened in 2015, there is a first adequate aid. Actually all the women declare to be satisfied of the degree of assistance.

Bodily Integrity
«Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault; including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction» (Nussbaum 2011, p.33).
It is important to endow the house with a security system and offer subsidised transportation. Moreover, the sense of security and trust has to build and strengthen. The cohousing is an old renovated house with garden and vegetable garden, so the residents are free to stay in a green area, but also to use buses to go to the city centre. During the interview, all the women, conscious of their limits, have affirmed they feel secure because they strongly trust in the assistants. Given the brief cohabitation experience, the sense of solidarity and trust amongst the residents have to enhance.

Senses, Imagination and Thought
«Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think and reason […] in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasant experiences and avoid non beneficial pain» (Nussbaum 2011, p.33).
It is important to encourage residents to participate in activities that could stimulate sense, imagination and thought, because elders are resources. This capability emphases the self-fulfilment entitlement: volunteers and students organise activities, also taking into consideration abilities and desires of the women. Daily excursions and bricolage works are strongly encourage even if the assistants do not do any efforts to convince the women. It gives to the women the opportunity to achieve functionings because internal capabilities are well sustained by structural factors.

Emotions
«Being able to have attachments to things and people ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude and just anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety» (Nussbaum 2011, p.33-34).
The focal point is the perception of cohousing as home. Emotions could be maintained and experienced only if cohousing becomes an emotional space. The observation has revealed that each private space, i.e. rooms, is organised according to the style of resident. During the interview, some of them have shown photographs, books, crochets, their treasures that they accurately safeguard. They

appear deeply aware about their frailties and do not hide the suffering for the move from «the place of the dearest ties, memories, ultimate synthesis of the past, support for the future» (Sgritta, Deriu 2011). At the same time, a huge surprise has been a sentence that can resume the spirit of all women: «you cannot pack memories and things in a suitcase, but you can do the same with isolation and at this age it is important to know that someone is near to you in every moment» (cit). Actually the interviews reveal they are happy because they live at home.

Practical Reason
«Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflect about the planning of one's life» (Nussbaum 2011, p.34).
Information plays a crucial role for elders which could choose consciously how to live.
In *Casa alla Vela* the women are constantly informed about the activities, the management of house, and the medical treatments, so they have a high perception about their role in expressing their opinions and choosing. The point is the cohousing management is structures in order to made awareness the residents and give the opportunities to participate in every decision. The women can on cannot decide to use this capability.

Affiliation
«(A) Being able to live with and towards others […] to be able to imagine the situation of another.
(B) Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others» (Nussbaum 2011, p.34).
According Pirhonen, this capability could be considered as an adequate bond amongst desire, ability, means, and access; an example is the desire to stay with others, the ability to join them, the proper space (means) to socialise, and the easy access to that place. The cohousing in Trento meets all this aspects: spaces (living room, garden, conservatory, and terrace); assistances so access; the opportunities of socializing. The residents have a strong desire to socialise so that they suffer from the absence of volunteers and students in summer time or when they prepare exams.

Other Species
«Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature» (Nussbaum 2011, p.34).
As described before, the access to gardens is assured. They take care of some plants, and of a cat at home, and during meals they share knowledge about times of nature, harvest, preserves, fruit jams. Moreover, all the residents describes Mountains (Dolomiti) as a part of their family.

Play
«Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities» (Nussbaum 2011, p.34).
The atmosphere of house affects residents' status, so it is important to organise socialising moments. The group of the residents belong to old-old population range and even if each resident has moved *voluntarily* (the family can make a request at the social cooperative SAD for hosting the older person, who can accept to remain or not after a trial period. The person are always free to leave) it is important to protect their status, their memories, and their emotions. Along with this, investing on recreational activities means to include people in a socialising space, to avoid loneliness and abandon. *Casa alla Vela* has the empowerment perspective and helps the women to be awareness and to have expectations.

Control over One's Environment
«(A) Political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life. (B) Material. Being able to hold property, and have property rights on an equal basis with others […]» (Nussbaum 2011, p.34).
The right to vote has been to guarantee as well as the regular incomes (as a result of savings, pensions and social security) and the cost of treatment by national social policy. These are guaranteed by Italian

law and moreover any kind of moving for participating to political debates is assured by the cooperative SAD. Incomes are completely under control of elders and their family.

4. CONCLUSION

The results expected by this first case study are that the elders preserve more easily their capabilities beyond the evidence that this housing model is chosen for economic reason (low income/ or house not owned) and for social one (weakness of the family care network and /or weakness of social services; a lack of freedom in mobility and in finding cultural centres). The collected data seem to contest the economic reason and in part the social ones.

Although the residents would not answer about their own income bracket, it is intuitively assumed that they do not belong to the lower income bracket of population: the room and board costs amount to approximately to 1˙500€ per month.

All the residents have a solid family: three out of four have sons and daughters that live in Trento, just one has a nephew that lives in other region of Italy. Trentino Alto-Adige region proves to possess one of the best healthcare system in Italy especially Trento, where promoting a good elderly life is at the top of policy agenda.

The residents have some healthcare problem, but given the age is presumably that this reduce degree of physical functional capability could be considered a physiological process.

It has been interesting to observe that UNECE defines *Casa alla Vela* a best practice: «This family-like setting makes the costs of assistance and daily life more sustainable for older persons and fosters their social integration by providing the setting for intra- and intergenerational exchange. With home-based care services and community assistance, the elderly people are empowered to live independently and are better able to avoid the need to be admitted to a nursing home» (2015).

Furthermore, *Casa alla Vela* represents a concrete example of the implementation of Nussbaum's approach that reveals how much the central capabilities of the four old old women are guaranteed in order to achieve dignity, well-being and happiness.

Senior Cohousing model remains a gamble for actors of the Third Sector and private one, maybe because there are even few evidence about a more efficient economic investment for public expenditure. The results highlight that in Italy cohousing model is living a slow process of implementation because policy-makers have to manage small economical resources for a diverse and vast demand of healthcare. This is the reason because they prefer to invest on existing structures (Retirement and Sheltered houses) or on *ageing in place*.

This study deals with the complex topic of elderly well-being in the *habitat*, certainly some conclusions could appear to strengthen. Nevertheless, in order to progress this research a comparison of the few top-down cohousing experiences against a control group of similar elders living in ordinary housing will have to do.

Appendix

1. Outline of the core relationships in the Capability Approach by Thomas Wells, «Sen's Capability Approach» - http://www.iep.utm.edu/sen-cap/
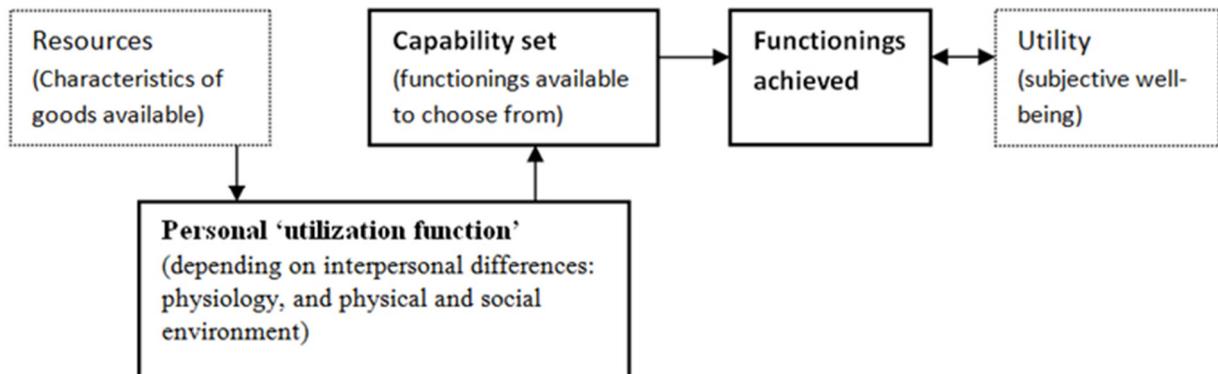
2. A re-examined outline, taking into consideration the life course frameworks by Lloyd-Sherlock 2002.
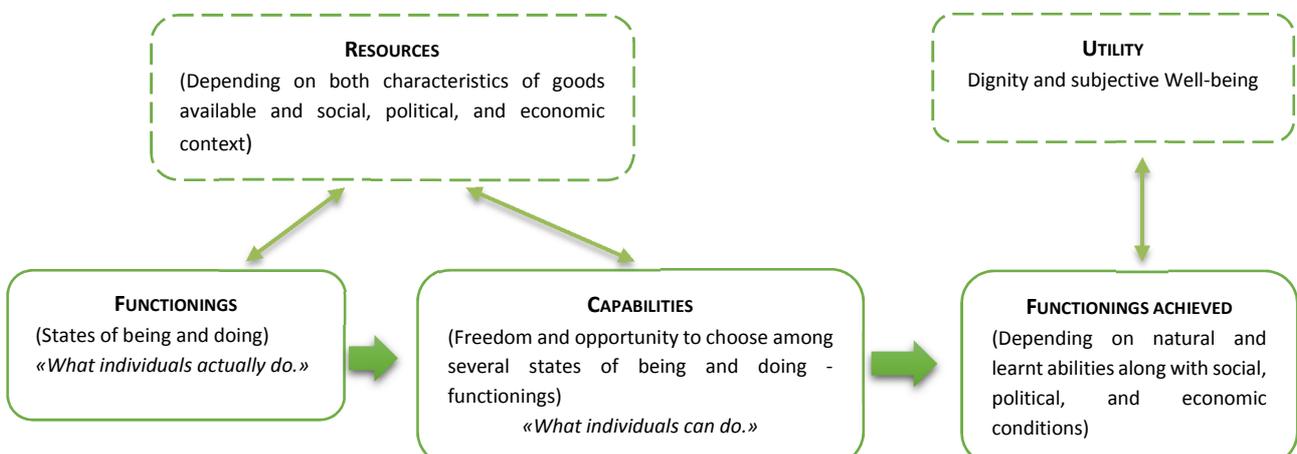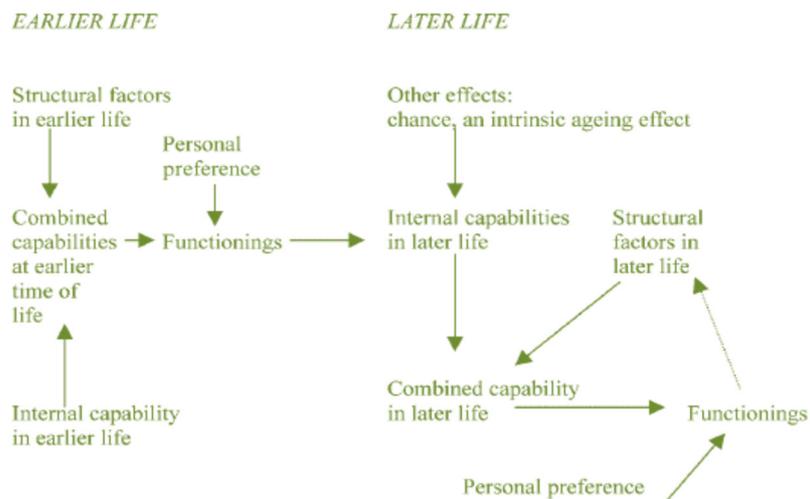
3. Scheme of Interview design:

RIGHTS	CAPABILITIES ACCORDING MADRID INTERNATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION ON AGEING	NUSSBAUM'S LIST OF CENTRAL CAPABILITIES
INDIPENDENCE	- Having access to food, water, shelter, clothes, and health care by means of income, family and community support, and self-help. - Having the ability to seek employment on an equal basis as others or doing activities in order to earn. - Having access to adequate educational programme. - Having the opportunity to live in safe and healthy environment; living according to one's preferences and capabilities. - Being able to live in own house until this is possible or to live where one decides.	BODILY HEALTH BODILY INTEGRITY SENSES, IMAGINATION AND THOUGHT PRACTICAL REASON AFFILIATION CONTROL OVER ONE'S ENVIRONMENT
PARTICIPATION	- Being able to effectively participate in the political life which includes having the right to free speech and association in order to suggest well-being policies. - Being able to knowledge and experience with younger generations. - Having the opportunity to offer a volunteer public service according to one's own interest and capabilities.	PRACTICAL REASON AFFILIATION CONTROL OVER ONE'S ENVIRONMENT
ASSISTANCE	- Have access to health care services in order to maintain or recover the best possible level of physical, mental, and emotional well-being; and to prevent or retard the illness. - Have access to social and legal services in order to improve one's own independence, protection, and assistance. - Be able to use adequate levels of institutional assistance as concern protection, rehabilitation, mental and physical stimulus in a safe environment.	LIFE BODILY HEALTH BODILY INTEGRITY PRACTICAL REASON
SELF-FULFILMENT	- Having the opportunity to develop end express one's own capability. - Being able to use one's senses to image, think and reason in a "truly human way", informed by an adequate education. - Have access to cultural, spiritual and leisure resources of the society.	SENSES, IMAGINATION AND THOUGHT EMOTIONS PRACTICAL REASON PLAY
DIGNITY	- *Be able to live to the end of a normal life and to not have one's life reduced to not.* - Being treated with respect and justice without any discrimination on the basis of age, ethnicity, sex, religion, illness, and economic contribution to the society.	LIFE AFFILIATION CONTROL OVER ONE'S ENVIRONMENT

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