

THE COMMUNITY FACILITATION HANDBOOK

V1.0

CO-CREATED BY

Art of
C&O.



Conscious Coliving
MAKING COLIVING THRIVE

DESIGN POWERED BY



SPATIAL
EXPERIENCE



WELCOMING WORDS

Welcome to the Community Facilitation Handbook! This book is intended to help you understand what community means and how to build it within your shared living spaces.

Community is a trending topic, yet very few understand what it means and how to build it. Genuine community, one that can be fostered and maintained organically, is still hard to find. But, authentic community is not impossible to create. This handbook is going to explore how to do just this, and it will showcase methods and processes of how to build community within your own space.

Whilst the main focus is on building community for coliving spaces, the learnings that you will acquire can apply to different industries as well: from hospitality to coworking spaces, community is based on the same building blocks. The main difference is that coliving is a more immersive experience, and that both building and maintaining community can be harder in this kind of setting.

In the Community Facilitation Handbook, you will learn:

- **What community means, how it is measured and how it is created;**
- **How to build community with the help of the community facilitator (CF) and understanding this position in terms of required skills, responsibilities, and personal profile;**
- **Identifying major mistakes in the community building process and how to avoid / overcome them;**
- **And Methods and processes to use that facilitate connection, group dynamics, conflict prevention and resolution, amongst other community building tools.**

These learnings and principles are not only valuable to coliving operators and community builders, but to any business or organisation that has community in its core value proposition.

Starting as a collaboration between Conscious Coliving and Art of Co, this handbook would not have been possible without the 15+ community experts that contributed with their insights and methodologies - a big thanks to Hazem Adel, Zarinah Agnew, Julianne Becker, Emily Bender, Paula Bublay, Penny Clark, Gosia Czwarno, Gaitan de Dietrich, Kai Drwecki, Sandra Greenstone, Anastasia Klimova-Kuimov, Nikita Kuimov, Connor Moore, Juan Ortiz, Gili Tal and Ed Thomas for their involvement.

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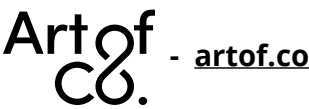
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AN INITIATIVE BY



Conscious Coliving is a spatial and experience consultancy that helps shared living ventures transform their communities so that they foster environmental sustainability, personal wellbeing and authentic connection. Through bespoke consulting services, Conscious Coliving helps you embed sustainability, wellbeing and community into your branding, strategies, design and experience.

Conscious Coliving provides an end to end consultancy offer for coliving developers and operators from concept phase all the way through to construction and operations. Their consulting services range from spatial design reviews, to support on financial modeling, impact strategies, community experience flows and conducting user and market research. Conscious Coliving aims to create shared living spaces that foster authentic connection to self, others and nature.



Art of Co is an educational and service platform focussed on developing authentic human dynamics in communal environments and creating strong human experiences within coliving spaces. Its mission is to solve one fundamental problem: how to create human experiences at scale.

Through its training center, Art of Co works with the most innovative coliving brands to create meaningful community experiences; with its educational center, Art of Co creates deep transformative content that shakes up the co-industry; and with its do-tank center, Art of Co launches and catalyses initiatives that serve the future of human connection.

Art of Co and Conscious Coliving are on a common quest to bring more understanding to the coliving industry around the topic of human and community dynamics. This first co-branded project reflects our deep desire to bring educational content and practical frameworks to the co-sector.

DESIGN POWERED BY



Spatial Experience is an innovation hub working in the intersection of design, technology and research to shape the future of living. Through a 360 approach, SPX drives impact in real estate by the work of three pillars: SPX Agency, which provides Branding & Marketing Creative Solutions to real estate brands; SPX Lab, a Research & Development platform exploring future development; and SPX Studio, a Start-up Studio bridging the digital and real world.

SPX has become an innovation engine within emerging real estate by bringing together thought leaders and specialists to co-create experience-driven products and services. With dedication, passion and drive, SPX develops unprecedented business concepts and inspires its partners to ignite meaningful change.

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HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

The Community Facilitation Handbook is split into the following three parts:

1. **“Community in Coliving”** explores the definition of community and coliving. We investigate reasons to invest in community building from a business perspective and explain the main challenge in community building for coliving operators: making your business sustainable while investing in a community building approach that makes residents feel like they are part of a co-created coliving experience.
2. **“Community Facilitation in Coliving”** explores the roles and responsibilities of the CF across the entire resident journey. Moreover, it outlines what type of profile is best to hire, as well as some common mistakes related to community facilitation from an operator’s perspective.
3. **And “The CF Toolbox”** explores different methodologies and processes to facilitate community: from conflict resolution tools to communication methods and group event formats, this toolbox is the go-to-resource list for any community builder out there.

We highly recommend reading the first two parts, regardless of your expertise or role in coliving and community building. The last part is more crucial for current community builders, yet still relevant for other coliving professionals as the learnings and processes can be applied not only in coliving, but in general human relationships and dynamics. Moreover, it will give a sense of what type of relationships and culture are possible to create, and how to deal with certain types of conflicts.

Whether a coliving operator, prospective operator, coworking space builder, or community manager, we hope that you will be able to create community for your residents - not only to enhance the overall experience, but also to apply innovative community building solutions to your space.

PS: Have an idea to share during your read or want to get in touch with us to help you build community? Then reach out to us via [this simple form](#) and we'll get back in touch.

PART I

COMMUNITY IN COLIVING



1.1 THE COMMUNITY MANAGER / FACILITATOR DEBATE

Too often, coliving, coworking and hospitality spaces hire specific staff members as so-called “community managers” (CM). This handbook is intentionally not called the “Community Manager Handbook” and there is one main reason: we believe that organic community and human relationships cannot be managed, but rather facilitated in their creation and maintenance. This is why the main focus will be on a crucial role: the one of the community facilitator (CF).

The term management often implies “the process of dealing with or controlling things or people” ([Lexico](#)). In contrast, to facilitate means to “make (an action or process) easy or easier” ([Lexico](#)).

The main difference lies in the mindset of community building. Whilst historically, the hospitality industry has tried to create engagement and entertainment with a top-down mindset, meaning having absolute control over the experience that residents and guests go through, community building requires the involvement of its members. The more members are involved and engaged, the stronger the community will be.

Hence, the role of the community team is not to manage human interactions; rather, it is to facilitate the process of community building by involving residents into a common group identity, crowdsourced from both operators and residents.

This is why we define the role of the CF as:

“A person responsible for community building by facilitating group interactions, open communication and bridging the gap between community needs and operational processes. Their ultimate goal is to support the emergence and maintenance of community by enabling residents to foster authentic connection, fulfill their individual needs and catalyse collective engagement.”

The term community manager will most likely remain in the hospitality sector, and even in certain coliving spaces: the approaches of a community manager often lead to imposing an already existing vision of how people should behave, without involving them in the process of building the foundations of their communal relationships. There is nothing wrong with that, but this mindset may not lead to building the real, long-lasting, authentic communities that people in coliving spaces are looking for.

In contrast, the CF is going to become a role of its own, still emerging in the coliving scene. It’s one of the hardest tasks to accomplish: CFs have to adapt to the needs of the community, understand what processes to facilitate and clearly communicate these approaches with residents.

Ultimately, coliving spaces have the potential to serve as a platform for building culture, not imposing it. This is the role of the CF - namely, to help build relationships and maintain strong group dynamics.

The Community Facilitation Handbook aims to provide you and your communities the resources and approaches necessary to foster and maintain authentic connection within your communities and throughout your teams, organisation, neighbourhood and beyond.

1.2 AN INTRODUCTION TO COLIVING

Knowing that this handbook is mainly intended for the emerging coliving sector, we need to start by defining what coliving means. This will be especially helpful for readers of different industries that are new to the concept.

A ‘basic’ definition of coliving can be described as “three or more people who are not related by blood, marriage or adoption choosing to share residential space” (Perdrix, 2019). As an emerging market that is inspired by existing shared living models such as cohousing, student accommodation, senior housing and build to rent / multifamily, there are many varieties of coliving. The kind of coliving we are talking about, however, typically shares the following features:

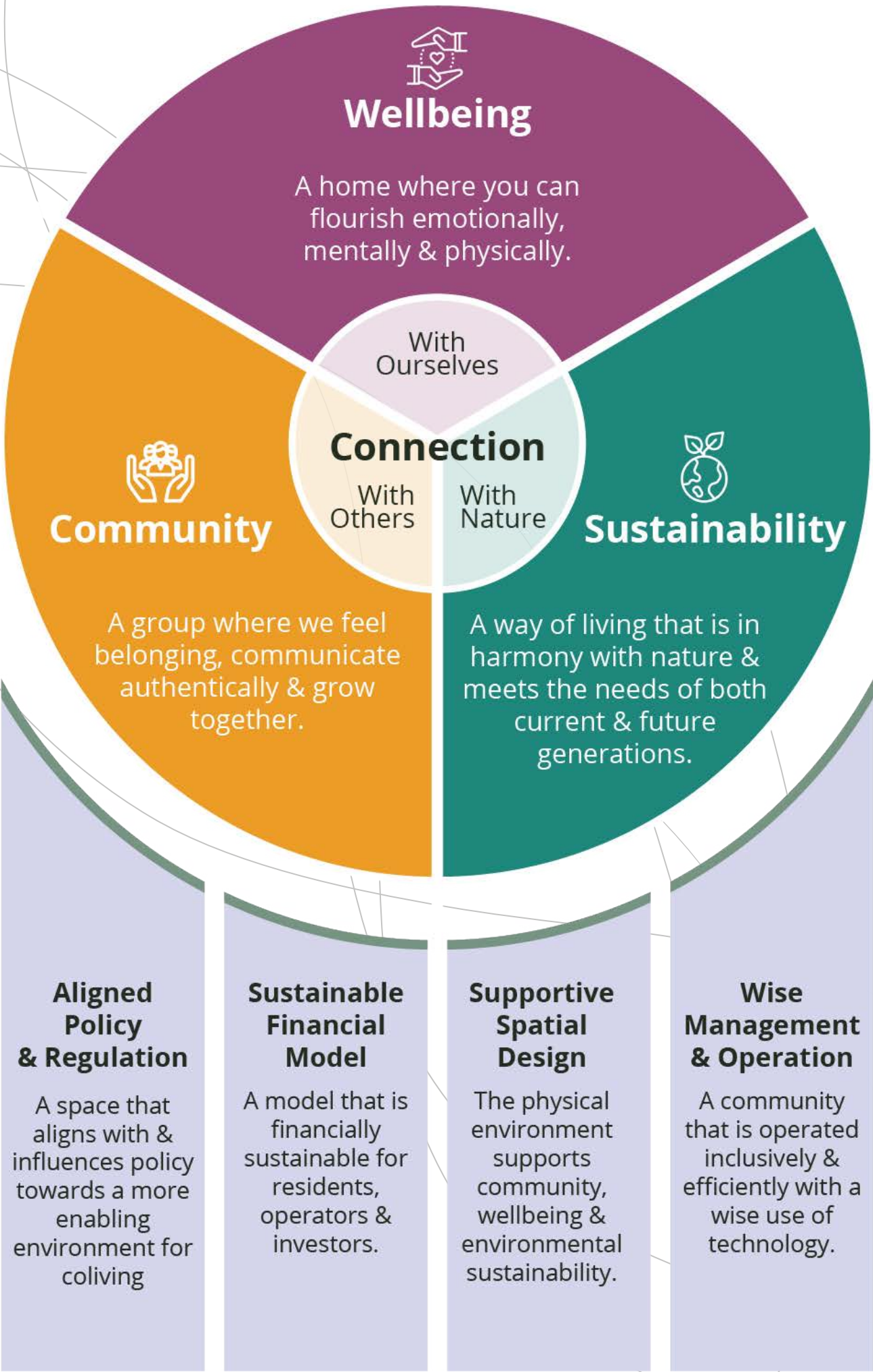
- A somewhat limited amount of private space (typically a bedroom and ensuite bathroom, sometimes with a kitchenette or small living space)
- Shared communal facilities (which may include shared kitchens, bathrooms, lounges, gardens, laundrettes, gyms and more)
- An emphasis on facilitating social interaction and building community
- A convenient ‘plug-in-and-play’ lifestyle which utilises modern technology (e.g. easy sign-up, one fee which covers all rent and bills, flexible contracts, cleaning included) (Corfe, 2019; GK, 2019; JLL, 2019; Knight Frank, 2019; Shafique, 2018).

Going further, we believe that coliving has the potential to be a fundamental shake-up of how we live: prioritising sociability, meaningful relationships and shared experience over privacy and ownership. When we think of coliving, we think of it as conscious coliving, which we define as:

A new take on an old way of shared living which promotes a culture of connection and flourishing, in which individuals and the collective share resources and an intention of living sustainably and harmoniously with each other and the planet.

Conscious coliving has social value at its heart, which means that it is a model that embeds economic, environmental and social impact into the core of the community design and business metrics. Conscious coliving furthermore integrates human-centered approaches that center on the idea of connection: connection to self, connection to others and connection to nature. For more on this topic, plus a list of related resources, Conscious Coliving has developed ‘The Conscious Coliving Manifesto Toolkit’ that provides resources and frameworks to help you develop a social value approach for your coliving community.

Whether traditional coliving or conscious coliving, it is worth understanding what sets these different types of community apart, and the different types of coliving communities that are currently being designed and operated. In the next sections we explore what community means, different community models and how roles, responsibilities and expectations are distributed and managed in each.



1.3 DEFINING COMMUNITY

Many, if not all, coliving operators have one key promise: community.

The problem is that the word community has lost its meaning. While certain coliving operators tend to think of community as “a group of people living in a space”, the truth is that people can share a building without being part of a community at all.

Community has to be defined as we used to define it: namely, as an emotional connection and identification between members of a group. If residents do not have an emotional affiliation with one another and don't share a group identity, then there is no feeling of community. In this case, the space would just represent an accumulation of residents that are not encouraged to interact beyond what is necessary.

Before diving into how communities are built within coliving spaces, let's take a step back and look at what we can understand: humankind's past and the role of community in humanity's existence.

Historically, communities tended to be formed around extended families and tribes. We also know that communities have formed around professions, religions, political beliefs, art and more. It seems that as a species, it is in our nature to form social connections with one another. But why is it that community is so important?

As a species, human beings have evolved biologically to be social: for 99% of homo sapien's existence we have lived, worked, played and died in groups of 20 or more individuals ([School of Life](#)). We would not have evolved and innovated in the ways we have if it were not for sharing and cooperating in different sized communities.

Historians such as Yuval Noah Harari have hypothesised that what makes humans different to other species is our capacity to engage in large-scale flexible cooperation, which has made us dependent on vast networks of cooperation for our survival ([Harari, 2011](#)). Some anthropologists have even found that “the crucial difference between human cognition and that of other species is the ability to participate with others in collaborative activities with shared goals and intentions: shared intentionality” ([Tomasello, 2005](#)). Our ability to cooperate around shared intentions (or collective myths as Harari calls them) is what created the modern societies and social contracts we all are a part of.

This research shows that homo sapiens are social beings, however, in the last few centuries we have become more and more disconnected to ourselves, others and nature and this disconnection is at the core of global natural, political, economic and health crises. Not only is it in our evolutionary DNA to live in community, but it is also a solution to many mental health issues caused by global health crises such as social isolation and loneliness. Loneliness has become such a health issue that countries like the United Kingdom have established [Loneliness Ministers](#) and social psychologists have proved that the health impacts of loneliness are equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day ([Holt-Lunstad, 2015](#)). Luckily for community advocates, some evolutionary biologists have directly linked the quality of our social relationships to having health benefits that can combat feelings of social isolation and loneliness ([Grinde, 2016](#)). So if community is so important, it's worth asking as a society why it is that we are losing our ability to maintain quality relationships and live, work and play communally.

We will not answer that question in this handbook, but rather provide resources that will help with better understanding the dynamics and skill sets needed to build community. Although we have lived in community for a large majority of human evolution, we are now living in the 21st century and the conditions for social relationship building are different. What that means and what that looks like is very different to what community was five hundred years ago, albeit even fifty years ago - technology has allowed us to connect in unprecedented ways, yet more and more, humans are willing to pay

for human connection. So what are some of the successful components of building community that are now widely recognised? Before getting into those, we wanted to highlight three of the essential components for what a successful community looks like:

- 1. Shared Values:** as mentioned above, humans thrive and cooperate via shared intentions and collective imaginations. The root of a strong community is its shared values and how those values are expressed, communicated and acted upon amongst its members. For example, when community members have a shared intention to live more sustainably, the community may experience stronger engagement than in a community with less shared goals. Another example are niche coliving spaces that focus on a core interest, such as coliving spaces for entrepreneurs or movie enthusiasts. In this case, alignment among members is strong from the beginning.
- 2. Psychological Safety:** the concept of psychological safety is used by organisational design and leadership experts and has been [formalised by reWork](#) (Alphabet/Google's work-focused research lab). Originally introduced by Harvard professor Amy Edmondson, the term psychological safety refers to a ‘shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking’ ([Edmondson, 1999](#)). This notion of risk taking and the feeling of support from others is crucial to successful communities: whether that's within a sports team, company, school or coliving space. By creating environments built on trust, coliving operators can ensure that residents will engage with one another meaningfully and authentically. As a concrete example, if there is a strong culture of listening, then members will be more open to being vulnerable with one another (e.g. sharing their fears).
- 3. Sustained Engagement:** regular engagement and collaboration is key for any successful community or organisation. Behavioural scientist and Professor at Harvard Business School, Francesca Gino, who ‘[cracked the collaboration code](#)’ found that environments with sustained collaboration contained individuals with similar community-enhancing mindsets such as “widespread respect for colleagues’ contributions, openness to experimenting with others’ ideas, and sensitivity to how one’s actions may affect both colleagues’ work and the mission’s outcome” (Gino, 2019). As a concrete example, coliving communities with weekly sponsored dinners offer a type of ritual where residents can connect on a repeated basis and naturally find ways to collaborate together. The same applies to any other regular activity such as group discussions, sharing circles or yoga classes.

“A group needs only two things to be a tribe: a shared interest and a way to communicate... Human beings can't help it: we need to belong”

- Seth Godin, Tribes

Creating environments of psychological safety and shared values will lead to longer term engagement and ultimately brand loyalty, retention and promotion. However, sustaining these key features in a community or organisation is very difficult: Gino recognises that when studying teams, “most people display the opposite mentality, distrusting others and obsessing about their own status” (Gino, 2019). The same could be said for communities: individuals living under one roof with different values, lifestyles, jobs, backgrounds, sexualities and so on can be rather defensive about their differences if a community environment becomes hostile. This is why community is about aligning needs and overcoming differences: only then can the magic happen.

That said, building community is also about **clearly setting and communicating expectations**. This is especially relevant in coliving communities, where residents are also offered additional service layers with their living accommodations. Building an engaged coliving community therefore means deciding what type of community you would like to operate and then sticking with it.

WHAT DOES COMMUNITY MEAN?

The authors of this handbook define community as “a group where we feel belonging, communicate authentically, and grow together.” Below we explore how different community facilitators define community, and what their approaches to community-building are.

“Community is about participation and engagement - and if they [residents] are not interacting, then they’re not a community.”

- Zarinah Agnew, Embassy Network & District Commons

“Community is a connection to a certain place: a sense of belonging to a place and the people around me. And it’s about getting to know your neighbours.”

- Gili Tal, Venn

“Community is about understanding others - understanding people’s needs, drives, and what makes them happy while at the same time finding the ways to create the right container.”

- Emily Bender, Chateau Ubuntu

Community means building community and everything that goes with it: creating a healthy culture that provides a positive, social experience. What I mean with that is that it makes us a better person, citizen, and community member: it’s generative, it’s not passive.”

- Sandra Greenstone, Community Building Consultant

“Community is a feeling of belonging. It requires two things: common values and a common goal.”

- Anastasia Klimova, Smena Station

“Community is about active participation and not being a spectator.”

- Nikita Kuimov, Smena Station

“Community is people who care about each other and want to connect. Coliving is meant to replace the sense of belonging that we used to have in small cities.”

- Gosia Czwarno, Community Experience Strategist

“Community means that you have a small to medium group of people who know each other well, see each other regularly, help and support each other..”

- Hazem Adel, Happy Pigeons

“We provide members the opportunity to connect among themselves and with their local neighbourhoods. We won’t push but we fast forward relationships to some extent.”

- Gaetan de Dietrich, Hmlet



1.4 THE VALUE OF A COMMUNITY

One of the main questions being asked by coliving operators when investing in community is “what are the social and financial returns of community building”? This question can be answered from two angles: from a resident standpoint and from an operator standpoint.

- 1. From a resident standpoint:** community contributes to wellbeing, personal growth, discovery and a feeling of belonging. As explained above, the need for social interaction is inherent in human nature, and creating a safe social environment can help with both mental and physical health. Moreover, coliving residents have the potential to contribute and exchange a multitude of ‘community capitals’ (e.g. social, economic, human and cultural capitals) to one another and local neighborhoods in which they reside. Moreover, through the power of shared endeavour, knowledge, skills and resources, community living makes life so much more efficient. For instance, residents can share cooking and childcare, borrow things from one another, and support each other in times of need, whether that’s helping someone with their CV, fixing their bike or buying them soup when they’re unwell.
- 2. From an operator standpoint:** overall, having a stronger community will require specific investment, for example, into the vetting phase, onboarding phase and into human resources such as the community facilitator. In return, operators can count on various cost savings including:
 - A. Reduction of acquisition costs due to stronger word of mouth: the stronger the community, the better your reputation, the stronger your word of mouth and the less you need to spend on marketing.
 - B. Reduction in maintenance costs as stronger communities create a sense of ownership amongst members and they take better care of the place: they consider it their home and therefore have more incentive in keeping it safe, clean and well maintained.
 - C. Reduction in event costs as community members become more involved in event-creation. When residents feel like they are part of a larger community, they are more likely to invest their creativity and energy into co-creating events compared to if only the coliving operator organises them.
 - D. Increased length of stay / retention: the better the communal experience, the longer residents tend to stay in a coliving space. This means less turnover, hence lower vacancy and acquisition expenses.
 - E. Higher quality product: since community is a core part of a coliving operator’s product offering, potential residents will be willing to pay more for an operator that maintains a stronger community. Similar to how Apple can charge a higher price if they design a superior phone, coliving operators that create better communities have a superior product and can financially benefit from higher demand and greater willingness to pay.

3. From an investor standpoint: stronger communities can benefit real estate investors in two main ways. First, if the building is being managed under a shared-revenue management agreement (in place of master lease agreements), a robust community that leads to higher retention and occupancy rates will translate to more profit for the operator and the real estate investor. Second, coliving operators that develop strong communities are much more likely to be long-term partners which will lead to a substantial savings of time and resources compared to changing operators every few years.

4. From the external community standpoint: stronger coliving communities will oftentimes lead to residents being more involved both socially and financially in the wider neighbourhood communities in which they are located. People that live close to the coliving location can socially benefit from open events hosted by coliving operators and coliving residents themselves will bring financial benefits to the wider neighbourhood by visiting shops and cafés or even hosting events at restaurants or community spaces in the area. Hence coliving operators can contribute significant community capitals to the external community and ultimately create strong relationships with local planners, community groups and residents.

On top of financial and risk-diminishing benefits, which are explored further in the article “[ROI on Community Building in Coliving](#)” (Perdrix, 2020), it is important to invest in community, because coliving spaces often make it part of their branding promise to their residents. A good 99% of coliving operators have the term community in one of their headlines e.g. “find truly like-minded people you’ll connect with”, core values, or as a key differentiator to other housing and hospitality models. If a space lacks authentic community, then there is a brand integrity issue, which will lead to a negative reputation and long-term business damage.

One thing to point out is that it is harder to change community building processes after the original processes have been established. The longer you wait to invest into community building, the higher the switching cost will be, as you will need to change your company culture, team structure, resident and brand expectations.

Now that we have explored the returns of community, we will look at the different types of coliving community approaches and the benefits and disadvantages of each.

P.S. We know it can be hard to change an already established approach. Many coliving operators struggle to change their community building processes once they are already in place. We highly recommend that you continue reading this handbook to understand how to create an organic community and to reach out to us with technical questions on how to implement these approaches.

1.5 DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMMUNITY APPROACHES

As there are different forms of communities, there also are different approaches of building community.

The two main approaches are what we call Top-Down (Management) versus Bottom-Up (Facilitation) community building. In the Top-Down approach, the operator imposes a vision of the community, its events, resident profiles, activities, and spatial and experience design. In the Bottom-Up (Facilitation) approach, the operator involves the residents across all of these steps.

As a concrete example, hotels typically have a top-down mentality: customers do not want to be engaged or responsible in the functioning of the hotel and want everything to be taken care of. Hotel providers might do feedback forms and customer surveys, but the traditional hotel experience does not include a part in which the customer shapes the experience with the operator.

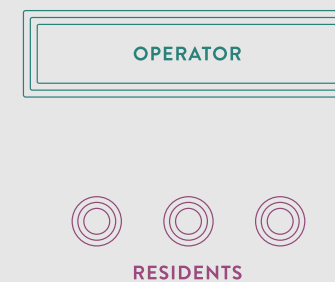
Coliving spaces are different: they serve and activate the needs of their residents. While the Top-Down approach may require less coordination and up-front investment, operators applying the traditional Top-Down approach miss out on leveraging the power, time and energy of residents in co-creating the experience to serve their needs.

This is why we advocate for a Bottom-Up (Facilitation) approach, which means involving residents in the creation and maintenance of the community experience. As an example, instead of creating an imposed calendar of events, the role of the operator would be to understand what types of events would serve the needs and interests of residents and then engage them in both the creation and promotion of such events.

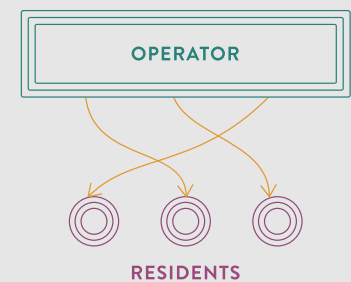
Not only does the Bottom-Up (Facilitation) approach make residents feel heard and seen, it also simplifies the role of the operator: instead of having to organise each part of the experience, the operator can focus on empowering residents to create the experience themselves. Coming back to the event creation example, a DJ does not need to be hired if a resident is a DJ themselves. The promotion does not have to involve high marketing costs if the residents are empowered to advocate the event to friends inside and outside of the space.

The results of a Bottom-Up approach are threefold: firstly, the creation of organic community due to engaged residents; secondly, higher resident satisfaction as residents can better satisfy their needs; and thirdly, operational processes that are less capital intensive in terms of both human and financial resources.

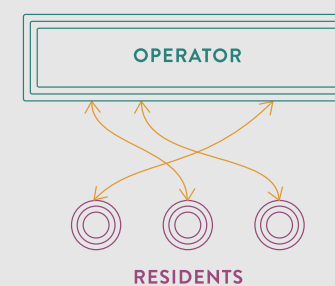
DO IT YOURSELF



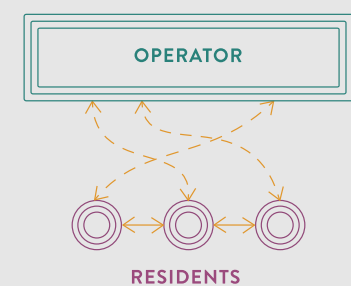
TOP - DOWN MANAGEMENT



BOTTOM-UP FACILITATION



SYSTEMS



In addition to the Top-Down and Bottom-Up approach, there tends to be two more approaches that remain outliers in coliving: on the far left, the “Do-It-Yourself” approach is when operators put very little human and financial resource into community building. Many high-scale, serviced apartments and low-cost coliving spaces use that approach, and they may often believe that the community will be formed organically and that they do not have to interfere within community building. If the operator does not have any influence on the experience, it is impossible to expect a community to build itself, as it requires residents to know how to connect willingly with one another - which is not always the case.

On the other side of the spectrum, the Systems approach implies that the operator not only influences the user experience, but teaches residents to be self-sufficient in organising their community. Those types of coliving communities are often long-term, in which residents have individual responsibility, run events and community assemblies by themselves, and where the operator is not actively involved in the day-to-day life of residents. The main goal of the operator here is to onboard residents into the community system and help residents in case of conflicts.

In this handbook, we are advocating for approaches that actively involve residents in the community building processes - mostly the Bottom-Up (Facilitation) approach. We also know that most coliving operators do not want to invest in the Systems approach - and that residents may not want to have the ultimate responsibility for running the space. The Systems approach usually implies higher up-front costs that operators may be intimidated by, but often leads to many longer-term cost reductions and additional benefits (e.g. the returns of community mentioned above).

This is why we encourage to shift from the Do-It-Yourself and Top-Down approach to the Bottom-Up (Facilitation) ones. Yet, the Bottom-Up approach cannot be done with a community manager mindset. This is where the community facilitator comes in: a key person and component of thriving coliving spaces, whose roles and responsibilities we are now going to explore.

SUPPORTING YOU TO MAKE YOUR COMMUNITY FLOURISH

This handbook provides a framework and tools for community building and facilitation. To take these even further, Conscious Coliving and Art of Co are partnering up to provide a series of services to coliving operators and community builders including:

UPCOMING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

Develop your community facilitation skills with a series of virtual sessions covering the main learnings and tools from the CF Handbook.

BESPOKE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

Implement the Community Facilitation methodologies across your community or company through bespoke consulting and workshops with the authors of the CF Handbook.

BENEFITS:

- Connect with and learn from other community facilitators
- Learn new tools and improve your community facilitation skills
- Learn to spot and avoid common community-building mistakes
- Develop bespoke community strategies for both in-person and virtual communities
- Create higher engagement with your community and improve your customer experience

FIND OUT MORE:

consciouscoliving.com/community-development-support/



PART II

COMMUNITY FACILITATION IN COLIVING



2.1 UNDERSTANDING THE RESIDENT JOURNEY

The key question explored in this section is: what does facilitating community in coliving look like?

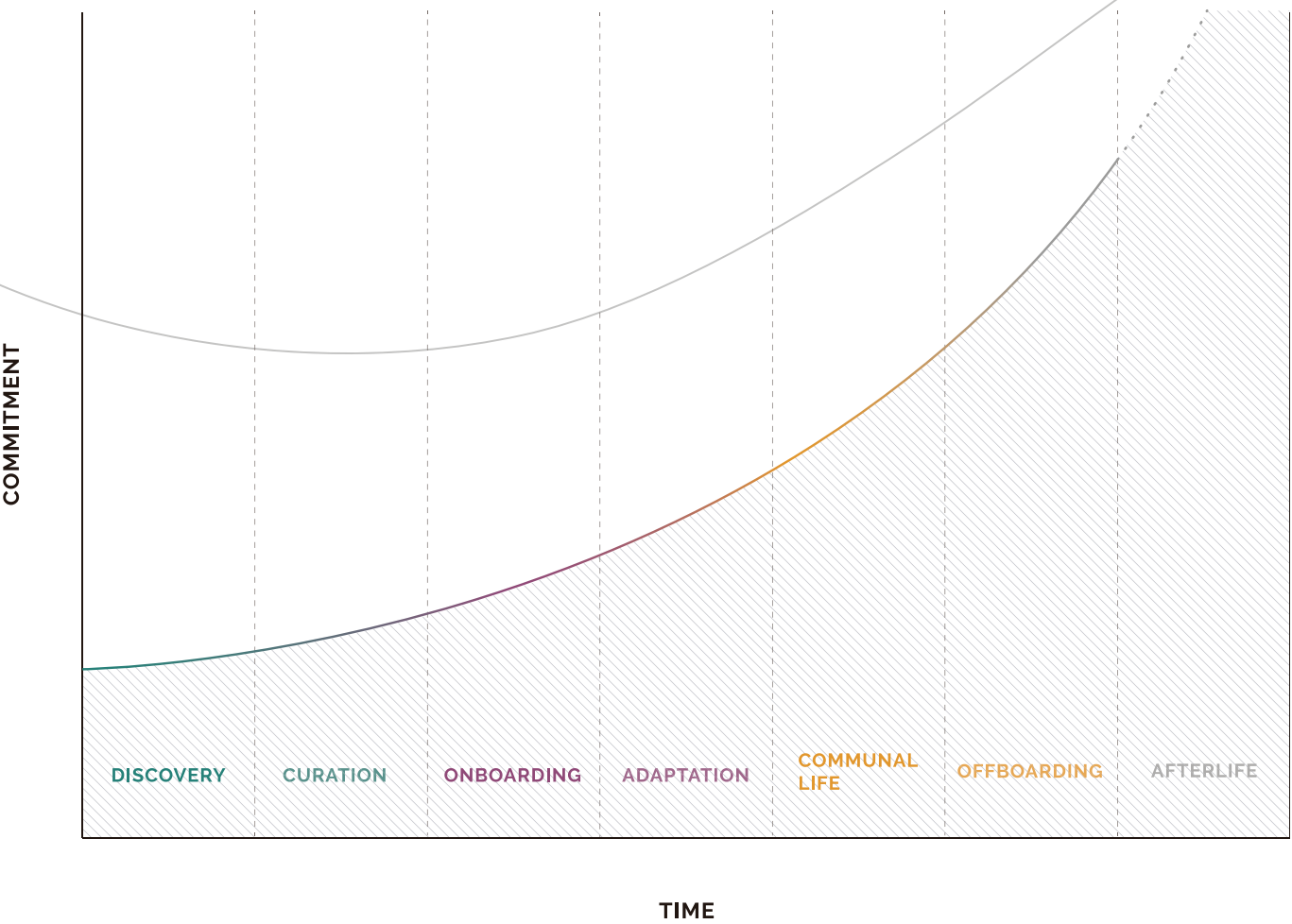
To answer that question, we need to explore the entire experience from a resident's perspective. It's only by understanding the resident's journey that we can identify touch points and, mainly through the CF, enhance those experiences as much as possible. Conducting user research in order to understand your user's needs is a best practice when developing and operating coliving communities. This section will help clarify which touch points are important to analyse when doing so.

First, let's have a look at the entire resident journey. Not every part of the journey is the responsibility of the community facilitator - for example, most of the initial interactions are the responsibility of sales and marketing. It is only afterwards that the community facilitator comes into play. The table below shows the 7 Steps of the Coliving Journey for both medium-term (1-6 months) and long-term (6+ months) operators: it showcases the different steps from discovering the brand to curating residents, onboarding them, offboarding them and the journey post-coliving.

COLIVING USER EXPERIENCE JOURNEY



COMMUNITY COMMITMENT CURVE



The visual to the left is a sample coliving user experience journey. We have identified the main user touchpoints that a resident can have with a coliving operator. The curve above is an example of a 'commitment curve': the idea is that the more a resident engages with the different touch points of a coliving brand, the more they commit to the brand and ultimately the community. On the next page we show how a coliving brand engages with residents during these different touch points, and which teams are involved.

JOURNEY STEP	PERSON IN CHARGE		RESPONSIBILITIES
DISCOVERY - Potential residents discover the coliving brand and their available locations.	Marketing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attracting new leads via targeted communication channels and strategies. Promoting the brand values and community experience to the outside world.
	Planning		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public relations with local stakeholders, city planners and investors
CURATION - The resident is vetted and accepted into the space.	Sales		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquiring, closing and managing bookings of new leads Conducting interviews and potentially site visits / virtual tours with leads
	Community Facilitator		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducting interviews and potentially site visits / virtual tours with leads Making sure that the lead is a good fit for the community
ONBOARDING - The resident gets integrated into current processes before and after move-in.	Operations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sending new residents operational guidelines and managing bookings / invoicing
	Community Facilitator		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcoming and checking-in new residents and presenting them with community guidelines Integrating the resident with community values and rituals
ADAPTATION - Ensuring the resident is well integrated with the brand and community culture.	Community Facilitator		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal check-ins to ensure that new residents are being integrated into the community experience Observing and understanding residents' needs and interests to enhance their experience Ensuring feedback loops and communication channels with residents are maintained and up-to-date
COMMUNAL LIFE - The resident continues to engage with the community and foster authentic connections.	Community Facilitator		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitating events, decision-making, conflict prevention / resolution and maintaining feedback loops with residents and appropriate teams
	Operations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring maintenance of building operations and on-site services
	Customer Insights		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducting user research in order to gather customer satisfaction and wellbeing insights
OFFBOARDING - The resident experiences final touch points before leaving.	Community Facilitator		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaving a final impression on the resident via personalised messaging and event curation
	Marketing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging members to refer the brand to their friends via referral programmes and brand loyalty initiatives
	Customer Insights		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sending feedback forms and conducting interviews with residents to gather user insights
AFTERLIFE - Keeping former residents within communication channels and communal activities.	Community Facilitator		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging past residents into other activities and initiatives, such as alumni platforms or future events
	Marketing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reminding residents of what they experienced and staying in touch Development and delivery of referral programmes and brand loyalty initiatives

As we've seen, the community facilitator plays a crucial role along most of the customer journey. From welcoming to integrating residents and making sure that the experience is fulfilling and emotionally safe, there are a lot of responsibilities on the CF's shoulders if the job is done properly. At the same time, certain items have not been mentioned as part of the CF job: fixing the shower, cleaning the floor and collecting payments, for example, are not roles for the community facilitator. And there is a good reason for this: the role of the CF is to facilitate community, not to manage the building. Which leads us to the next section, namely, what the CF is not.

PS: Curious how you could dismantle your own user journey and improve your customer touch points? Reach out to us via [this simple form](#) and we'll get in touch.

2.2 THE COMMUNITY FACILITATOR: ROLES, SKILLS, AND INTEGRATION WITHIN THE TEAM

So, what exactly is a community facilitator (CF)? In this section, we are going to dig deeper into the role of the community facilitator: what it is, and what it's not; what it requires, how to hire, and how the role fits in within the rest of the organisational team. This is a core part of The Handbook, and will teach you about a position that will radically enhance the experience of your coliving space.

2.2.1 WHAT THE COMMUNITY FACILITATOR IS NOT

One of the biggest challenges for community facilitators is an overload of tasks. In certain spaces, community facilitators are not only in charge of community building, but also sales, marketing and operational tasks such as solving maintenance issues to ensure overall cleanliness of the coliving space.

Coliving operators have to keep in mind that the entire customer journey involves several departments and that mapping it out properly is crucial for a functional coliving space. Here are the roles that are NOT part of the community facilitator:

- **Sales:** the role of the CF is to make sure that residents have a great experience, not to get new residents in, as this takes the focus away from enhancing customer experience. The CF can be involved in the curation process, as s/he represents a direct link to the community, but does not involve administrative tasks linked to any sales processes (e.g. signing contracts, collecting payments, etc.).
- **Marketing:** while the CF can be involved in marketing initiatives, for example being in charge of taking pictures of the space and community events, it should not be the CF that runs marketing initiatives such as social media campaigns. Here again, it poses another distraction to the core mission of the CF. Marketing initiatives however have to be true to the actual experience and CFs must work directly with marketing teams to ensure that there is no misalignment with marketing campaigns about the in-house services and product. It's better to under promise and over deliver than the opposite.
- **Customer Support:** Ideally, the CF is also removed from regular customer support issues. While the CF is the first point of contact for residents, keeping the focus on interhuman relationships and individual experience is more important than tasks that can be automated. For example, having a holistic customer support system that takes care of basics such as "what time does the gym open" and "cleaning rotations" gives the CF more time to focus on unique problems and experiences.
- **Operations:** This is the trickiest part. It is important to differentiate building and community processes. In the former, the responsibilities lie around operational excellence: making sure that the building technology and its internal processes such as cleaning and elevator maintenance are maintained. This is the role of the operations manager, who can delegate to relevant employees and suppliers when operations break down. Making the CF role free of operational duties in regards to the building allows the CF to focus on the communal and experience processes only.

"A clear demarcation between operations and community is very important. It is important these are two distinct roles, because although for a member it may seem like the same role, it requires different skill sets. Otherwise it can lead to confusion and members might not be sure what to expect from whom."

- Gaetan de Dietrich, Hmlet

2.2.2 THE COMMUNITY FACILITATOR WITHIN THE TEAM

To sum up, the role of the community facilitator needs to be integrated within the entire team structure. There is not one way to structure coliving teams, but overall, there is a golden ratio of 15-30 residents per community facilitator. This implies that in larger residences, or coliving spaces with multiple locations, there will be a team of community facilitators managed by a community lead.

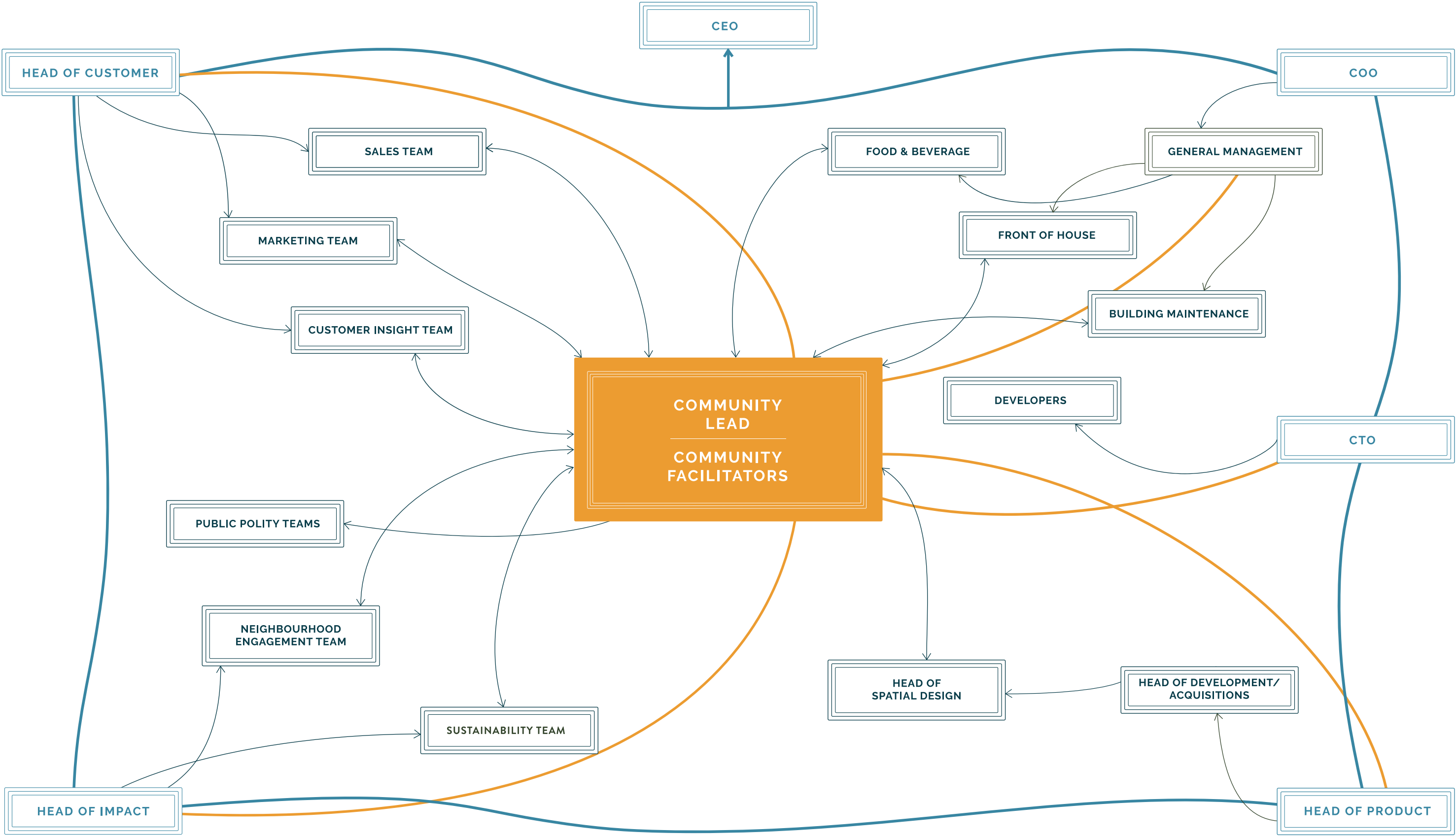
The reasoning behind the 15-30 residents is threefold: first, based on Dunbar's law and examples from company structures, it is hard to intimately know, connect with and and prioritise more than 15 people at a time. Second, from the coliving communities that we, the authors, know and have visited, the community tended to fall apart if there were more than 30 residents per CF. And lastly, certain cluster sizes, meaning the amount of residents that share common areas and kitchens, can sometimes be as many as 30 people. Hence, we recommend to aim for 15 but believe that up to 30 is both socially and financially sustainable.

The mind-map below shows a sample organisational team structure for larger coliving spaces. In the case of several locations, having a lead community facilitator (i.e. head of community) who is in charge of managing different CFs, integrating feedback and being the link between the CFs and the management team is highly recommended.

This organisational chart is meant to support you in thinking how your community teams relate with the wider coliving professionals and employees within your company. Of course, this is a sample chart designed for large and complex coliving companies, and smaller coliving spaces will have roles that are combined. The thick purple lines are the strongest relationships that the CF has in regards to other team members, while the thin purple lines are additional interaction loops.



SAMPLE COLIVING ORGANISATION



This sample organisational chart shows that it is important to ensure community teams and CFs are supported within the wider company team, so that they can focus on community building and that they can help other departments to make more informed and strategic decisions.

2.2.3 THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY FACILITATOR

Now that we established the boundaries and have better understood the customer journey, we can restate the role of the community facilitator as such:

“A person responsible for community building by facilitating group interactions and communications and bridging the gap between community needs and operational processes. Their ultimate goal is to support the emergence and maintenance of community by enabling residents to foster authentic connection, fulfill their individual needs and catalyse collective engagement.”

In order to fulfill their duties, the community facilitator has different responsibilities across different stages of the user journey:

- **Resident onboarding:** welcoming and integrating the resident within the community, while contributing to the improvement of the onboarding experience with community experience and operations teams.
- **Ensuring resident wellbeing:** ensuring the appropriate systems and containers are in place to allow for residents to feel emotionally and physically well and safe.
- **Community development:** facilitating the flourishing of the community and its activities, empowering residents to be involved and take ownership of events, initiatives, communal budget allocation, resident meetings and engagement with local neighbourhoods
- **Conflict resolution:** preventing potential tensions between residents and facilitating the resolution of communal tensions on both an individual and collective level.
- **Product development:** working with different departments (operations, marketing, design) to improve the overall user experience and concept based on resident feedback

In contrast to traditional hospitality roles, the job of the Community Facilitator requires a different profile than most hoteliers, operations managers, or front desk positions. Below we explore these distinctions and what the key skills and criteria for a great community facilitator consist of.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY FACILITATOR?

Discover how community facilitators across several coliving spaces define their role based on their own experience.

“Helping people achieve belonging should be a facilitator’s first task.”

- Nikita Kuimov & Anastasia Klimova,
Smena Station

“The role has three main jobs: integrating, connecting, and rewarding. [...] It’s a tough job. You need to be comfortable with an active but modest role. You’ll feel a small incremental impact but can’t necessarily feel it day by day.”

- Gaetan de Dietrich, Hmlet

“The role should be to improve the entire user experience. The community facilitator should be on the spot, for the space and people.”

- Gosia Czwarno,
Community Experience Strategist

“A facilitator is someone who supports a group through a process. As a community facilitator, you can do the same things as a community manager, it’s just less top-down. A community facilitator should be: well-training, trusted, fair, consistent, helping community members come together, being an example of proactive positive communication techniques, and helping members solve problems that inevitable would arise.

- Sandra Greenstone,
Community Building Consultant

“The goal for the community facilitator is to build and maintain a robust neighbourhood community - so not just between members in the building but also involving businesses and organisations in the neighbourhood. This role is the heart and soul of our community and is the most important at Venn. [...] The facilitator helps members connect their desires and ideas with resources within our platform (for example budget, spaces, skills).”

- Gili Tal, Venn

“There is no “one fits all” type of role, as it should help the community to achieve its greatest state. If people don’t want to make decisions, then a centralised community manager should be the case. The same applies for the opposite.”

- Zarinah Agnew, Embassy Network
& District Commons

2.2.4 SKILLS OF A COMMUNITY FACILITATOR

Now that the role of the CF has been defined, let's look at the required skill sets.

Spoiler alert: it's not really about event management or optimising Google reviews.

Finding great community facilitators is hard because the role requires someone who not only has strong soft skills but also is willing to potentially take on long hours and be quite flexible according to the needs of the community. This person also needs to know how to develop fundamental boundaries between themselves and the community and other staff.

That said, the following skills are required for a qualified CF:

Soft Skills

- Empathy: recognising and being sensitive to others' needs, behaviours, feelings, belief systems and point of views
- Emotional intelligence: understanding, sensing and managing emotions in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathise with others, overcome challenges and defuse conflict
- Deep listening: being able to listen from a deep, receptive place in oneself, to deeper and often subtler levels of meaning and intention in the other person
- Communication: clear, consistent, non-violent communication and public speaking
- Group facilitation: conflict resolution, aligning interests and needs, game and event facilitation
- Leadership: setting the tone of culture and leading the group dynamics when necessary (e.g. bringing in positivity and humour when the energy is down)
- Playful: being able to stimulate light-hearted, flexible, and imaginative dynamics

Hard skills

- General project management and self-organisation
- Event planning and management
- User experience design and customer journey mapping
- First aid and emergency

Profile Criteria

- Solution finder: proactive problem and solution identification for processes
- Self-awareness: being mindful and self-critical around his/her own actions and being able to develop strong boundaries
- Emotional stability: a predictable, grounded personality who has integrity with his/her values
- Social character: while the CF does not have to be an extrovert per se, she/he should be someone that gets satisfaction from interacting with and understanding people
- Flexibility: CFs need to be flexible in terms of schedules and responsibilities, while being able to respect and enforce their own self-care and boundaries

Other Useful Skills Based on the Exact Position

- Wellbeing: knowledge in mental health, suicide prevention, and issues of consent and sexual assault, substance abuse awareness
- Photography, copywriting and social media understanding
- Understanding of operational platforms (i.e. property management softwares)
- Data and feedback gathering

Many coliving operators look for their community facilitators within the hospitality industry. Yet, based on the profile described above and based on feedback from operators we interviewed, bringing on board someone with a background in psychology or even a recreational background (e.g. camp counselor) can be a strategic approach. Similar to social workers that assist drug addicts or homeless individuals, a CF needs to know when to say NO and when to distinguish between their personal and professional lives. As an operator, however, it is your responsibility to not overburden your community teams and not take advantage of their soft skills and flexibility with long shifts and 'on call' expectations. Community teams need to be valued financially and emotionally, and they must feel connected to the wider team structures.



WHAT ARE THE SKILL SETS NEEDED FROM COMMUNITY FACILITATOR?

Explore the best practices for the role of the CF according to these community builders.

"Gotta be a giver, gotta get fulfillment out of making people grow. If not excited about other people growing, don't do this job."

- Gaetan de Dietrich, Hmlet

"They have got to be "people people" with strong people skills."

- Ed Thomas, The Collective

"Take soft skills literally: being soft. You're dealing with humans, taking on the mother function. It's like the cool mum of your friends: she's not going to judge you, and still giving you good advice."

- Paula Bublay, Sunshine Embassy

"It's important that people like them and it's tough because we don't have metrics on how people are likeable. Basic values such as integrity, respect and legitimacy need to be present to have consistency in the relationship between community."

- Zarinah Agnew, Embassy Network & District Commons

"A CF has got to be a good reflective listener, able to help people listen to one another, and know when situation requires further intervention from authorities."

- Sandra Greenstone, Community Building Consultant

"A facilitator needs a good set of soft skills, but the idea of a facilitator is also helping residents shape their soft skills."

- Nikita Kuimov & Anastasia Klimova, Smena Station



2.2.5 A COMMUNITY FACILITATOR JOB-POST TEMPLATE

To make the job of finding the right profile easier for you, we decided to create a sample job template you can use to recruit a community facilitator. This open source template is meant to help you attract, hire and retain top talent within the community facilitation and community building sectors.

Once you have better understood the roles and responsibilities of a CF, you also need to understand the biggest challenges of community building, which we explore below.

THE ULTIMATE COMMUNITY FACILITATOR JOB DESCRIPTION

*The following is a full template of our ideal CF job description.
You can use it for your own inspiration and job description creation.*

Location: **Amsterdam, Netherlands**
Salary: **35,000€ - 55,000€ / year**

We at Sample Coliving are looking for a new team of community facilitators. As a coliving space, we offer residents flexible housing with the benefit of living within a thriving community.

Founded in 2017, Sample Coliving operates in 7 cities with more than 300 total units in operations. Our vision is to allow individuals to flourish with the help and support of peers - which is why we invest into community and offer our residents an opportunity to experience authentic community.

But community is not created by itself: this is why we need you to help us build and maintain community in one of our Amsterdam residences. If you care about human beings and love connecting and understanding others, and you have an eye for how to improve processes and to create one-of-a-kind experiences, then this job is for you.

As a community facilitator (CF), you are going to work directly with our residents and our head of community to be responsible for five main areas:

- **Resident onboarding:** you will be welcoming and integrating the resident within the community, while contributing to the improvement of the onboarding experience with our community experience and operations teams
- **Ensuring resident wellbeing:** you will make sure that the appropriate systems and containers are in place to allow for residents to feel emotionally and physically well and safe
- **Community development:** your main role will be to facilitate the flourishing of the community and its activities, empowering residents to be involved and take ownership of events, initiatives, communal budget allocation, resident meetings and engagement with local neighbourhoods
- **Conflict resolution:** another area will be sensing potential tensions between residents and facilitating the resolution of communal tensions
- **Product development:** you will be working with our different departments (operations, marketing, design) to improve the overall user experience and concept based on resident feedback

Being a CF requires certain skills - when building community and working with people, you need to have the ability to practice:

CORE SOFT SKILLS

- **Empathy:** being able to put yourself in someone else's shoes without judgment, including understanding their thinking and feeling
- **Emotional intelligence:** understanding, using, and managing emotions in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathise with others, overcome challenges and defuse conflict
- **Deep listening:** being able to listen from a deep, receptive place in oneself, to deeper and often subtler levels of meaning and intention in the other person
- **Communication:** clear, consistent, non-violent communication and public speaking skills
- **Group facilitation:** conflict resolution, aligning interests and needs, as well as workshop and event facilitation
- **Leadership:** setting the tone of culture and leading the group dynamics when necessary (example: bringing in positivity and good humour when the energy is down)
- **Wellbeing:** knowledge in mental health, suicide prevention, consent and sexual assault

In addition to strong soft skills, the following skills are necessary to execute your responsibilities well:

HARD SKILLS

- **General project management and self-organisation**
- **Event planning and management**
- **User experience design and customer journey mapping**
- **First aid and emergency**

Going further, the following skills can come up during your role - and depending on your own skill set, we will adapt your position according to the best fit:

POTENTIAL COMPLEMENTARY SKILLS

- **Photography, copywriting and social media understanding**
- **Substance abuse awareness**
- **Understanding of operational platforms (i.e. property management softwares)**
- **Data and feedback gathering**
- **Basic understanding of mental health issues**

Does this resonate with you? If yes, you should have the following profile:

PROFILE CRITERIA

- **Solution Finder:** you identify problems and solutions proactively
- **Self-awareness:** you are mindful and self-critical around your actions and emotions
- **Social character:** you get satisfaction from interacting, understanding and helping others
- **Adaptable:** you can be flexible in terms of schedules and responsibilities, while being able to respect and enforce your own self-care and boundaries
- **Playful:** being able to stimulates light-heartedness, flexibility, and imaginative dynamics

Your background and education is not what takes precedent in our eyes - this role is about being able to understand and help individuals and communities. Come and discover for yourself what community means to you!

"It's challenging but it's definitely worth it. The amount of human richness and empowerment is worth all the energy that you invest into helping people to connect." - Francesca Botai, Community Facilitator at Sample Coliving Netherlands.

Next steps: after your application is received, we will schedule a chat to discover each other and decide whether this is a fit.

Anastasia Singer, Head of Community and the Sample Coliving Team.

2.3 BIGGEST COMMUNITY BUILDING CHALLENGES

As community building is a complex challenge, having a great community facilitator will not guarantee a thriving community. A strong community experience requires buy in and support from all teams, especially at the management level. If community metrics are not embedded into the core of the business performance indicators, it may be tricky to foster an authentic community within your coliving space, let alone in multiple spaces if scaling. Many other components also come into play: from the management structure to misunderstanding community building approaches. In this section we share the key mistakes that operators make in regards to building authentic communities.

2.3.1 CONCEPTUAL MISTAKES

- **Mismanaged and unclear expectations:** clearly communicating expectations to residents is vital and needs to be done at the beginning of the onboarding and move-in phases. If expectations are not clarified upfront, residents can rebel and resist when they are brought up later. These can include operational expectations (i.e. cleaning rotations or cooking schedules) and behavioural expectations (such as zero-tolerance policies for bullying and harassment, non-violent communication, and expectations around being proactive in terms of resident engagement).
- **Weak onboarding processes:** it is crucial to ensure that the responsibilities of the community facilitator are visible to all residents and that they understand who the right person is for what type of problem. If there is little or no onboarding, residents will have a harder time integrating within the community as quickly as when there is a strong onboarding process. When onboarding residents, sharing the community guidelines and teaching them how to deal with problems is important to ensure that the company's internal processes are all being followed.
- **Underestimating the importance of curation:** it is hard to create a culture when too many residents need to adapt. Generally speaking, a new resident will adapt to an existing culture if it is predominant. In other terms, if the majority of residents do not have the cultural components that are part of the ideal coliving community, then a toxic / unwanted culture may end up becoming the predominant one. Vetting residents and understanding their personality, behaviours and drives from the very beginning is crucial to establish a thriving community.

"There is temporality in communities: the first year of living together will require more structure, exchange, and governance systems than the following ones."

- Zarinah Agnew, Embassy Network & District Commons

- **Architectural fallacies:** it is very difficult to create community in spaces that are not designed for communal interactions from an architectural point of view. Community needs to be built between people who have the opportunity to interact. This implies two statements - first, that spaces need to have common areas, ideally that are accessible and centralised. If the common space is located in the basement or at the end of a long corridor for instance, it will be less convenient for residents to go and spend time there as compared to if it would be near the entrance room. And second, that community needs to be built locally. Many coliving operators who manage different buildings try to create an extended community instead of putting the focus on building out stronger connections between members of a single residence.

"A big challenge is the decentralisation of locations and 'online only' community building. When events are not held in your building, then relationships can not flourish in-person. When the architecture does not allow residents to go through common spaces, especially if non-existent, then there can be no reminder of a sense of community at all."

- Gosia Czwarno, Community Experience Strategist.

2.3.2 MISTAKES REGARDING THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY FACILITATOR

- **Misunderstanding the role of the CF:** as has been mentioned throughout, it is important to understand what a community facilitator is. Coliving spaces that look for a house manager, on-site operations person and marketing manager within the same role do not understand that the CF's role is to focus on community building and not on operations. Often a CF's role becomes operations-focused when the company grows quicker than the community team can adjust to. This frequently results in burn-outs, high CF turnover, and a negative perception of the community and company culture. Moreover, activities such as hiring the right profile (as covered in Section 2.3), educating employees of the company to understand the role, and providing continuous training to community facilitators, is crucial to maintaining the role of the CF.
- **Undervaluing the role of the CF:** if a community facilitator does not get paid well enough or is not seen as fundamental to the company's success, it can result in high turnover. Many community facilitators are self-aware and confident about their own value within a company and/or community. Broadly speaking, the extent to which coliving managers value their CFs reflects how much the company is investing in the community.
- **Not setting enough boundaries and clear expectations for the CF:** Work overload is common for community facilitators, not only because the job can be emotionally draining, but also if the job includes responsibilities that go beyond community building. Several of the community facilitators with whom we have spoken have shared that they often have a tendency of giving too much of themselves on the job, losing themselves in the role and becoming overwhelmed, stressed, and burned out. Not having clear work hours and responsibilities defined for CFs often leads to burnouts and ultimately turnover. Moreover, regardless of whether the CF lives on-site or not, it is important to allow him/her to have a space in which s/he can have time away from residents. Lastly, CFs are not baby-sitters of residents: their primary goal is to help residents become responsible and mature enough to solve conflicts by themselves, only intervening when absolutely needed.
- **Not seeing the CF as part of the community:** there is a debate as to whether the CF - and in fact any other employee of the company - should be seen as part of the community. Our stance is that the CF plays a role in building the community and hence is part of it. Not seeing the CF as part of the community could lead to the CF feeling disconnected from the community and reduce the potential of the CF to really understand the community from the inside out. While the CF has responsibilities that other members do not have, it is important for the CF to also have moments in which s/he can be with residents as a participant rather than just an observer / contributor.
- **Disregarding CF/staff wellbeing:** while the CF takes care of resident wellbeing, it is up to the managerial team (whether the executive team or 'Head of Community' in the case of several community facilitators) to ensure the mental and physical wellbeing of the CF. Good communication, transparency, and regular feedback mechanisms can go a long way in ensuring that a CF is able to thrive in their role and thereby help residents and the community to thrive as well. CFs are the community's eyes and ears, and out of all staff will have the deepest understanding of residents, and so must feel supported to deal with issues that arise which may lie outside of their scope. When this support is not there, a community facilitator can burnout and/or lose trust in management, leading to less motivation and ultimately less contributions to the community.

'I've seen a few coliving spaces of smaller scale where there is one person holding everything and I think there is a lot of risk with that because it puts a lot of strain on that person, and I've seen people in that position really affected by the strain of wearing all those hats. It's such a unique job and the effort required to juggle all the different competing priorities must not be underestimated.'

- Ed Thomas, The Collective



- **The community versus convenience paradox:** this is what we call the Community vs. Convenience paradox. The more convenience a space offers (e.g. daily cleaning) the less involvement from residents, and hence less community. It is therefore important to have systems in place that make residents responsible for their actions and for the overall condition of their home. Something we have noticed is that some coliving operators have too high of a service layer to their product (e.g. daily cleaning, top down events programming and 24/7 reception) which disincentivises residents to take responsibility for the space. This creates a double edged sword scenario: the more service layers provided, the more residents put the responsibility of taking care of their home on the operator and the less they take ownership within the community.

COMMUNITY VS CONVENIENCE PARADOX

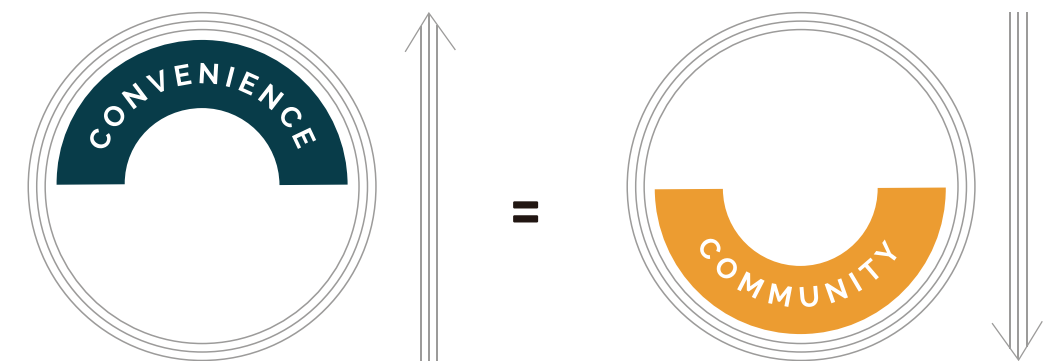
2.3.3 MISTAKES IN COMMUNITY BUILDING

- **Not tackling the tragedy of the commons:** without appropriate guidelines around community agreements, there is a risk that residents fall into the tragedy of the commons. In other words, small actions such as leaving a cup in the sink because the sink is already full of dirty cups is a natural occurrence, as the responsibility cannot be linked to one member specifically. An operator should think about how to avoid the tragedy of the commons, from procedures and rules around cleanliness to designing coworking spaces with storage that allows residents to tidy away their belongings.
- **Allowing territoriality and grouping:** it is also normal sub-groups within the community to emerge, and for residents to identify with some more than others. The problem arises when that specific sub-group becomes disinvolved from the rest of residents, and worst, sees their preferences, habits and culture as the "right" way to do things. This is especially the case when it comes to long-term residents, who may claim spaces for themselves rather than being open to new residents. It is the role of the community facilitator to observe those dynamics and take action if it becomes a repeated problem.



What can happen is that when people start to work and hang out with each other and the circle starts to close, facilitators will remind them to check in with others and have them be involved with the wider groups (and remind the groups to stay open to new members)

- Julianne Becker, Coconat



The examples mentioned above are some of the most common mistakes that occur within coliving spaces in regards to community building. We hope that these examples will bring you awareness, help you enhance your experience and improve your overall processes. Now that you understand the biggest challenges to community building, in the next section we suggest a toolkit of best practices to help foster a thriving community.

PART III THE COMMUNITY FACILITATOR TOOLBOX



TOOLBOX OVERVIEW

In the last part of the Handbook, we have compiled a series of tools and resources that CFs can use to enhance the experience in their communities. In fact, the use of these tools can go beyond just CFs: these approaches can be also used by management teams and residents themselves. We have organised these tools by which phase in the user journey they can be used, and have included accompanying materials and resources for coliving operators and their community teams.

In this section, we present tools and approaches for the following:

- **COMMUNITY DESIGN TOOLS**
- **DECISION MAKING TOOLS**
- **GROUP FACILITATION METHODS**
- **PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES**
- **COMMUNAL EVENTS / RITUALS**
- **CONNECTION WITH NATURE**
- **COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION TOOLS**
- **TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATIONS**

This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of tools but rather a few of the approaches we have identified as key to the community building processes. Some of the tools require specific training to master, and others can be taught amongst staff and residents in a more autonomous manner.

For prospective and established operators, we recommend tapping into our other resources and services to establish the Bottom-Up (Facilitation) culture into your team, which you can find at the end of this book. In the meantime you can familiarise yourselves with some community building best practices with the tools provided below.

"Any instrument should be practiced systemically and regularly. Working socially is a muscle which needs to be trained, so developing those skills happen over time."

- Nikita Kuimov, Smena Station

3.1 COMMUNITY DESIGN TOOLS

Applicable phases: Onboarding, Adaptation, Communal Life



Description: Every community needs a common goal, alignment in values and a clear governance structure. The following tools will help community builders to apply existing frameworks to their coliving spaces in order to get a clearer vision of what community means to them. These tools are most important before the creation of the community, but can also be used post-creation in order to improve the community design.

DRAGON DREAMING

Dragon Dreaming is a playful and inspiring method for assisting individuals and groups who seek to align on values and goals. The process allows teams to build together a strong vision (dream), turn it into concrete objectives (plan) and actions (doing), and then acknowledge the whole process to move on (celebrate). In coliving spaces, the method can be used during onboarding as a way for the facilitator and the rest of the community to know what each new member’s aims and goals are. As it is typically done in a group setting, Dragon Dreaming can also help members connect with one another and have an understanding of each other’s needs, dreams, and goals. Dragon dreaming can also be used as a project management tool for setting goals in a relaxed way.

THE COMMUNITY CANVAS

The Community Canvas is a framework to help build and run a new community, or analyse and improve an existing community. The Community Canvas is separated into three main sections: Identity, Experience and Structure. These sections are then divided into 17 themes that help you explore the structure and values of your community. The Community Canvas also includes a ‘Minimum Viable Community Sheet’, which is a great tool to use when developing the guidelines of your community with your teams and community members.

COMMUNITY BUILDER: DESIGNING COMMUNITIES FOR CHANGE

This is a practical toolbox for starting and designing your community with over 40 different tools to help you understand who your community members are and what they need from the community. The toolbox was developed by [Ghost](#) with the support of Lana Kristine

Jelenjev, one of the admins of the Community Builders Facebook group (another resource we highly recommend). Similar to The Community Canvas, this toolbox can be used in the ideation phases of your community in order to identify the community’s values and visions. These tools are great resources when hosting participative workshops with coliving residents and/or teams.

THEORY U

Theory U is a way of making a system (or an individual) sense and see itself. The model suggests shifting from a personal, individual-centered approach to a collective, group-centered one in order to move towards a more sustainable, healthy life. It suggests that society should get to “ecosystem awareness” forms of cooperation. This process is known as the “journey of the U” and can be used to reflect on your user journey, from the concept stage all the way through in-house life. It is a great tool to use in the ideation phase for your coliving concept and/or community, and to test and learn from prototypes along the way.

Resources:

- [Dragon Dreaming \(The Art of Life\)](#)
- [Dragon Dreaming Tool Box \(Dragon Dreaming\)](#)
- [The Community Canvas \(Community Canvas\)](#)
- [Introducing the Minimum Viable Community \(Fabian Pfortmüller\)](#)
- [Community Builder: Designing communities for change \(Ghost\)](#)
- [Community Builders \(Facebook Group\)](#)
- [Creating your Community Commitment Curve](#)
- [ToolboxToolbox \(Toolbox Toolbox\)](#)
- [Design Sprint Kit \(Google\)](#)
- [Mckinsey Design Index \(Mckinsey\)](#)
- [Theory U \(Presencing Institute\)](#)

3.2 DECISION MAKING TOOLS

Applicable Phases: Onboarding, Adaptation, Communal Life



Description: One of the biggest challenges in building community is figuring out how to make and take decisions that feel fair and inclusive. Below we share some participatory decision-making tools that can help your community make better decisions. These methods can be used during group events such as community assemblies, or be used continuously as a technological enhancement to in-person gatherings.

WHALE4

Whale4 stands for “Which Alternative is Elected” and is an open source web application dedicated to collective decision making and “everyday life voting”. The tool helps users choose collectively amongst several alternatives through polls, voting and ballots. Whale4 is based on voting theory and allows you as an operator to easily visualise results of the different collective decision making processes.

LOOMIO

Loomio is a collaborative decision-making tool that makes it easy for groups of all shapes and sizes to collaborate and make decisions across time and space. It works as a free software web application, where users can initiate discussions and put up proposals. As the discussions progress to initiating a proposal, the group receives feedback through an updatable pie chart. Loomio includes several features including themed groups discussion threads, visualisation tools (polls, proposals, etc.) and set outcomes that allow for clear next steps.

GRADIENTS OF AGREEMENT

this is a tool that enables members of a community to express their support for a proposal in degrees, along a continuum, rather than being trapped into expressing support only in terms of yes and no. This approach is more in line with the way many people actually think. An agreement scale can range from “1- I Endorse this proposal” to “5 - I have serious objection with this proposal.” Those with the highest/lowest level of agreement can then share how the proposal could be modified to better suit those at the other range of the scale.

Resources:

- [WHich Alternative is Elected \(Whale4\)](#)
- [Loomio User Manual \(Loomio\)](#)
- [Gradients of Agreements Scale \(Community at Work\)](#)
- [How Gradients of Agreement can help move groups forward \(Michigan State University\)](#)
- [Group Decision Making \(Tamera\)](#)
- [Involving citizens in community decision making: a guidebook \(Program for Community Problem Solving\)](#)
- [Sociocracy 3.0](#)
- [Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision-Making \(Sam Kaner\)](#)

3.3 GROUP FACILITATION METHODS

Applicable Phases: Onboarding, Adaptation, Communal Life, Offboarding



Description: An important role of the CF is empowering members through events and tools that allow them to not just be spectators but to also participate actively in the community. A variety of the following group facilitation methods and activities are meant to support group bonding, create a safe space to share between individuals of the group and can be used by both the community facilitator and community members. Group facilitation processes can allow for collective decision making, idea sharing and authentic sharing and vulnerability.

COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE WORKSHOP FACILITATION

Collective intelligence is the body of knowledge that emerges from the collaboration and collective efforts of a group. Collective intelligence workshops are particularly well-suited for coliving spaces. Components of a collective intelligence workshop include getting ideas from different sources, mapping out relevant areas of intelligence, areas making decisions as a group, forming consensus, and motivating people. This can be very useful when a coliving space needs to gather information, needs and insights from its residents or larger community. One method of collective intelligence workshops that is well known is the World Café, in which participants are invited to several rounds of discussing a topic of mutual interest in small groups. This can be used to gather insights and feedback from residents as well as host public engagement workshops with local stakeholders.

OPEN SPACE

This is a self-organising collective activity for unleashing creativity and leadership. By inviting people to take initiative and responsibility for what they care about, open space sessions offer participants a marketplace of inquiry, reflection and learning, bringing out the best in both individuals and the whole. It is comprised of a facilitated circle in which participants suggest themes for workshops and choose those that they wish to explore, whilst being able to move between them. Afterwards, there is typically a closing circle and a report of the proceedings that is distributed to all participants.

ABCD METHOD

The ABCD Method is a visioning exercise to help organisations progress towards embedding more sustainability in their strategies. The ABCD Method is a way of planning in which a successful outcome is imagined in the future, followed by the question: what do we need to do today to reach that successful outcome? The Method is broken down into four parts: Awareness and Visioning, Baseline Mapping, Creative Solutions and Deciding on Priorities. Also known as “backcasting”, this method can be used to identify a future outcome or vision for your community and to explore concrete action steps to then achieve those outcomes.

Resources:

[Running Design Workshops \(Intercom\)](#)
[How to Facilitate Workshop \(Howspace\)](#)
[Facilitators toolbox for workshops \(Mind Tools\)](#)
[Planning a workshop \(Mind Tools\)](#)
[Doing an Open Space \(Anne Stadler\)](#)
[Hyper Island Toolbox \(Hyper Island\)](#)
[The World Cafe \(Art of Hosting\)](#)
[The ABCD Method \(Natural Step\)](#)
[A Manual for Group Facilitators \(The Center for Conflict Resolution\)](#)



3.4 PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

Applicable Phases: Communal Life



Description: Coliving spaces offer the opportunity for residents to nurture and develop themselves both personally and professionally. As places with a lot of diversity and human capital, coliving communities are perfect for exchanging knowledge, intelligence, wisdom and cultures. Community facilitators can enhance this process through hosting and facilitating specific practices. Below we list a few examples of such practices.

SHARING CIRCLES

Circles are the oldest form of social interaction and a powerful way of building trust and connection within a community. Modern day circles are often defined as safe spaces to come together, share, be listened to, and support each other. In circle, advice is not given and criticism, judgments, and comparisons are left out. It is a space where participants can take off their mask to be completely and authentically themselves. For coliving spaces, achieving this level of authenticity can be an extremely powerful way of creating vulnerability-based connection among residents. In a circle, there can be deep sharing, storytelling, and discussion, but also movement, touch, silence, and immersion in the beauty of music and nature. There is typically an altar in the center of the circle where sacred objects and items for sharing are welcome, although this is not necessary. Circles can last anywhere between an hour to several hours, depending on the occasion.

HOTSEAT

Hotseat is a group activity in which participants get to know each other on a deeper level by taking turns on the “hotseat” and being asked a variety of questions. The usual practice is for everyone to sit in a circle with one person sitting in the hotseat, who answers questions from the rest of the group. The players should be encouraged to ask good, meaningful questions that can allow the person to share significant and important things about himself or herself. This kind of activity is another easily accessible form of creating openness and connection among coliving residents.

PITCH SESSIONS

A community facilitator can encourage members to practice their public speaking skills through preparing and delivering short presentations. The topic of these presentations can be related to work, personal goals, skills the member can offer to the community, or more. Not only does this support members in shaping their soft skills, but it can also offer an opportunity for members to connect and understand more about each other and their professional lives.

MASTERMINDS

A mastersmind is a peer-to-peer mentoring group in which members meet regularly to help each other solve their problems with input and advice from the other group members. The term mastermind was originally defined by Napoleon Hill as “the coordination of knowledge and effort of two or more people, who work toward a definite purpose, in the spirit of harmony.” A mastersmind serves as a tool for participants to create and implement goals, brainstorm ideas, and support each other with total honesty, respect and compassion. Residents of coliving spaces with similar interests can align to create mastersminds on different topics and goals.

Resources:

[How to Run Your Own Circle \(Naima Ritter\)](#)
[The Circle Way Guidelines \(The Circle Way\)](#)
[The Practice of Healing Circles \(Healing Circles Global\)](#)
[Hot Seat \(Leadership Inspirations\)](#)
[Hot Seat \(Group Games\)](#)
[How to Start and Run a Mastermind Group \(Lifehack\)](#)



3.5 COMMUNAL EVENTS/ RITUALS

Applicable Phases: Onboarding, Adaptation, Communal Life, Offboarding, Afterlife



Description: Hosting events that do not require special facilitation but that have a great impact are key to community building. These types of events are what we call rituals - repeated events that bring the group together and create space for people to interact, bond, and exchange. Coliving spaces can adopt these rituals and be creative around which type of events would serve their members best.

SHARED MEALS

Sharing food is an ancient practice that allows people to connect. Eating communally increases social bonding and enhances one’s sense of happiness and connectedness within the community. Research from Oxford (see source below) has revealed that the more often people eat with others, the more likely they are to feel happy and satisfied with their lives. Community activist Geoph Kozeny says that, “when the frequency gets up to four meals a week or so, the social glue gets stronger.” In coliving spaces, members can come together not only to eat, but also to take turns preparing food. This is a way to offer acknowledgement and appreciation among the group and create shared responsibilities that often enhance a sense of ownership and engagement within the community.

“We have traditions: one of the longest lasting traditions in all three of our locations is a ‘dig-in dinner’, a neighbours dinner that happens every month to welcome new members but it’s also an event that people never miss. Sometimes it’s a potluck dinner or it can be a partnership with a local chef / restaurant.”

- Gili Tal, Venn.

COMMUNITY ASSEMBLIES

A community assembly is an organised gathering among community members and staff. They can serve as a way of making decisions, obtaining feedback and getting a sense of what residents want. You can think of these assemblies as a ‘town hall’ or ‘committee meeting’ that can be held once a month, quarterly or bi-annually. These assemblies should have a clear agenda and can be a space to get feedback about customer satisfaction, community experience and operational issues.

IMPACT-ORIENTED EVENTS

We know that humans tend to create strong bonds when they share an intention of serving others and/or nature. Organising group activities that create a positive impact not only within the internal community but also on the wider community (e.g neighbourhood, natural environment) is one such way that CFs can enable this type of bonding. Impact-oriented activities can include things like urban gardening, local volunteering, beach / canal clean ups, and soup kitchens.

TRANSFORMATIONAL EVENTS AND WELLBEING PRACTICES

Wellbeing is key in building and maintaining healthy communities. We recommend incorporating practices such as breathwork, yoga, meditation and ecstatic dance into regular coliving activity life. Breathwork, for instance, can help reduce anxiety, boost immunity, and process emotions. Yoga and meditation can help develop inner awareness. Offering such practices in groups can help create healthy habits, improve mental health, and strengthen community bonds.

While a CF may not be able to facilitate all of these, he/she can collaborate with others who can offer such practices to the community. Note that sometimes complex mental health issues, such as in the case of depression or suicide, can require the intervention of an expert.

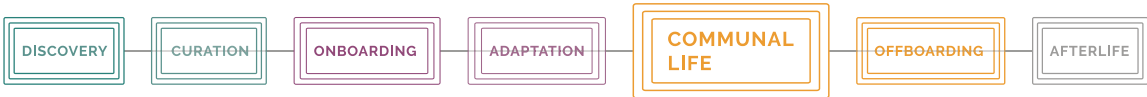
Resources:

- [Common Meals in Cohousing Communities \(Cohousing.org\)](#)
- [Social eating connects communities \(University of Oxford\)](#)
- [Using food to build healthy communities \(HLW\)](#)
- [About Holotropic Breathwork \(Stanislav Grof\)](#)
- [Online Breathwork Sessions \(Breathpod\)](#)
- [Loving Kindness Meditation \(Headspace\)](#)
- [The Power of Group Meditation \(Chopra Center\)](#)
- [What is Conscious Dance \(Awakehumanbeing.com\)](#)
- [Guide to Ecstatic Dance \(Ecstaticdance.org\)](#)



3.6 CONNECTION WITH NATURE

Applicable Phases: Communal Life



Description: Connecting with nature is one of the core elements of conscious coliving. It offers a host of benefits to residents: it can help them reduce stress, boost immune systems, increase energy levels, enhance coping mechanisms, align with a more natural rhythm of life, become more present, awaken the senses, have more clarity, improve mental health, increase attention spans, and encourage the adoption of more sustainable behaviors. While it can sometimes be difficult for coliving residents to connect with nature, particularly in urban settings, we outline several approaches that community facilitators can employ to enable this important connection.

OUTDOOR FIELD TRIPS AND ACTIVITIES

Community facilitators can organise regular outings for residents to spend time outdoors together. Examples include hiking, biking, swimming, fishing, kayaking, fishing and rock-climbing. CFs can also organise weekend or extended get-aways that include camping or staying in places surrounded by nature.

INDOOR PLANTS

Having indoor plants does not only add aesthetic beauty but can also improve mood, reduce stress, increase attention span, and purify the air. Many people report that simply looking at the color green helps induce a relaxing and calming mood. Some plants such as the Boston Fern and Snake plant are also known to remove airborne pollutants and detoxify the air.

GARDENING

Urban gardening is emerging all over the world as a way to encourage locally-grown food and adoption of sustainable ways of life. As an educational and bonding tool, a shared garden offers coliving residents not just a space to connect with plants and nature, but also to learn about gardening techniques and about active participative modes of decision-making, negotiating, interpersonal dynamics, etc. Gardening helps us come back to the basics of life and to remember how we humans are intricately linked with the earth.

NATURE-BASED MEDITATION AND MINDFULNESS

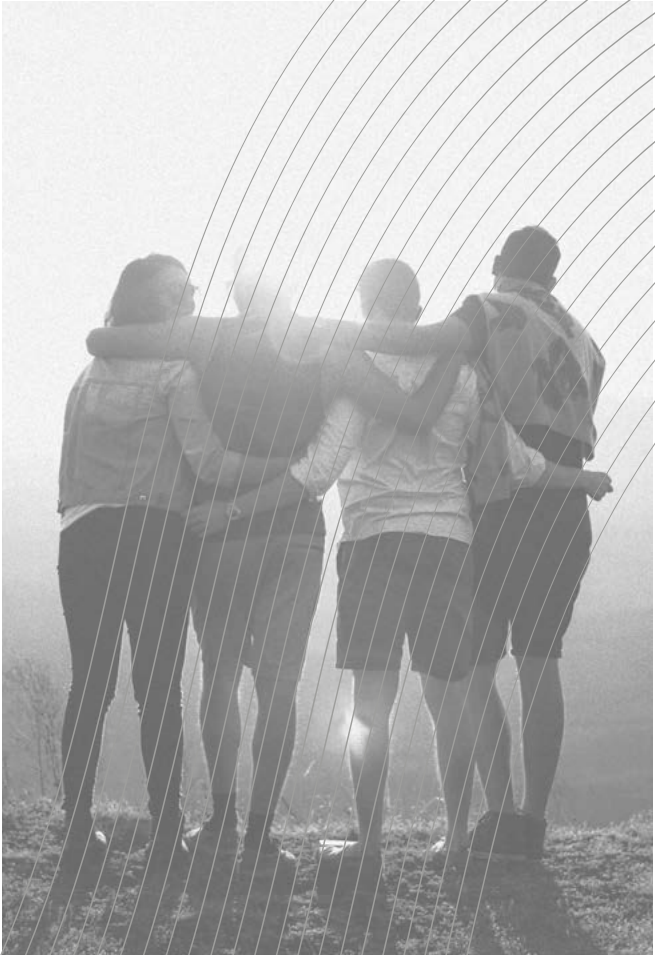
Nature-based meditation and mindfulness practices are another way to encourage residents to connect with nature. Facilitators can encourage or organise group sessions in which residents practice meditation under a tree, take a “forest-bath,” engage in mindful listening of nature sounds or do outdoor walking meditation. Other examples include taking the time to explore a park and notice something new, watching an animal work or play until it departs, and observing a cloud until it changes shape or disappears.

BALANCED DIET

We are what we eat. Becoming more aware of what we eat is a great way of establishing a stronger connection with nature. Consuming more plant-based proteins can help one maintain an optimal state of functioning and health. Research also shows that shifting to a plant-based diet is one of the best things one can do for the planet. CFs can collaborate with operations teams to explore how to encourage a more balanced diet for residents.

Resources

- [4 Reasons Connecting with Nature can be Great for Your Health \(Onegreenplanet.org\)](#)
- [Two Mindfulness Practices to help you Connect with Nature \(Mindful.org\)](#)
- [Positive Effects of Nature on Your Mental Well-being \(Positivepsychology.com\)](#)
- [Houseplants Support Human Health \(RHS.org\)](#)
- [10 Plants that Improve Health and Wellness](#)
- [Nature Meditations \(Meditationoasis.com\)](#)
- [Walking Meditation 101 \(Eomega.org\)](#)
- [10 Nature Meditations. Understanding Self, Knowing Life \(Healingforest.org\)](#)
- [Forest Bathing Beginner’s Guide \(Healing Forest\)](#)
- [Permaculture and Community: LILAC Green Cohousing \(Discover Permaculture\)](#)
- [Urban-gardening ultimate guide \(Gardening Know How\)](#)
- [Urban Gardening Toolkit \(Urban Gardening\)](#)
- [Beginner’s Guide to a Plant-Based Diet \(Forks over Knives\)](#)
- [Plant-Based Diet Best for Planet and People \(UN University\)](#)



3.7 COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Applicable Phases: Adaptation, Communal Life, Offboarding



Description: Conflict is inherent in community and tensions cannot be avoided. This is why the role of the operator and CF team is to understand the methods that will allow tensions to be mediated, instead of turning them into long-lasting, unresolved scars for the community. That said, there is often a fine line that CFs need to tread between facilitating conflict and getting too involved. Many coliving spaces choose to stay away from the intermediary process of meddling in the concerns of members. However, there are several conflict-management frameworks and communication tools that CFs can be familiar with and offer to residents.

“The major challenge is to be better able to be productive in working through conflict. Our society is all about blame. The one method that helps most broadly across all roles: nonviolent communication. Because it’s not just technique, it’s a paradigm shift. Nonviolent communication is about stating your needs, not judging one of the other.”

- Sandra Greenstone.

NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION

Nonviolent Communication offers a compassionate method for conflict resolution, where all parties can get their needs met without violence, coercion or blame. Foundational concepts of NVC include that people want to give freely but if you force someone to give, you force them to either submit or rebel; and that all humans share the same universal needs and that all humans have the innate capacity for compassion. Conflict only arises when strategies for meeting those needs by different individuals or groups clash. NVC proposes ways for people to become aware of their shared needs and then finding collaborative ways for meeting those needs. The basic process of NVC consists of 4 components: observation, feelings, needs, and requests.

“We do not require facilitators to be trained in NVC but we give them the basics of how it works and empower them to dive deeper into the practice. NVC is at the core of a strong community. It is not necessary but it is something that everyone should be aware of and learn about. It just makes life so much easier and better.”

- Smena Station.

BEGINNING ANEW

Beginning Anew is a simple and highly effective exercise based for resolving conflicts that inevitably arise amongst people who live together. It is a tool for looking deeply and honestly at ourselves, our past actions, speech and thoughts and to create a fresh beginning within ourselves and in our relationships with others. It is a four step process in which one person speaks at a time and is not interrupted during his or her turn. The other member practices deep listening and once the first person has finished, takes his/her turn going through all four steps. The four steps are: 1) naming positive qualities in other persons, 2) expressing regrets, 3) sharing hurt, 4) restoring peace and asking for support. This mindful approach to conflict can be used between members of staff, between residents and even in other professional and personal environments and situations.

RADICAL CANDOR

Radical Candor is a communication principle coined by management guru Kim Scott. It is the ability to challenge directly and show that you care personally at the same time. Most people have been told some version of “if you don’t have anything nice to say, don’t say it at all.” Radical Candor proposes that to give praise and criticism effectively, you have to authentically care about the other person. CFs can model this principle with other coliving staff and encourage residents to adopt it as well.

Resources:

- [Conflict Resolution Guide \(Plum Village\)](#)
- [Beginning Anew: Four Steps to Restoring Communication \(Plum Village\)](#)
- [NVC Online Resources \(NVC Resolutions\)](#)
- [NVC Instruction Guide \(The Center for Nonviolent Communication\)](#)
- [Community Mediations and Hard Conversations \(The Alternative Justices Project\)](#)
- [Community Mediation \(Concord Conflict Solutions\)](#)
- [Nonviolent Communication \(Marshall B. Rosenberg\)](#)
- [Building United Judgement \(The Center for Conflict Resolution\)](#)
- [The Mediator’s Handbook \(Jennifer E. Beer and Caroline C Packard\)](#)
- [Difficult Conversations \(Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton and Sheila Heen\)](#)
- [Radical Candor \(RadicalCandor.com\)](#)
- [Why Every Company Need to Adopt Radical Candor \(ThreeSixtyEight\)](#)



3.8 TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATIONS

Applicable Phases: Discovery, Curation, Onboarding, Adaptation, Communal Life, Offboarding, Afterlife



BESPOKE COLIVING TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

Below we list a few technology solutions that are tailor made for coliving developers and operators and that are often able to integrate with one another. A strong coliving technology tool has API-integrations that allow certain platforms to embed themselves with existing tools that coliving operators may already be using. As an operator, you want to avoid a ‘technology surplus’, where you are relying on too many platforms that ultimately lead to confusion amongst your staff and residents. This is why some operators choose to create their own in-house platforms and apps, such as Ollie, Common and The Collective.

If you are still scaling as an operator, however, it may be best to integrate several of the technology platforms mentioned here, especially if they can be streamlined with one another with simplicity. As a community facilitator, it may be your role to have an understanding of these platforms and engage with them on a day to day basis. We recommend that operational roles not be mixed with community responsibilities, and these roles actually require different personalities and skill sets. That said, however, it is good for community facilitators to have a general understanding of these tools so that they

can be involved in the appropriate conversations that regard the feedback loops involved in these platforms. Getting community facilitators involved in these conversations will help get insightful feedback from members into the UX design of these platforms and ultimately help enhance experience flows and member satisfaction.

Resources:

Property Management Systems: tools to manage booking, invoicing, customer communication and operational integrations > [Yorlet](#), [Obeyo](#), [Kndrd](#), [The Housemonk](#), [Kin](#), [Resharmonics](#)

Access Control + Connectivity Solutions: tools to increase accessibility, security and flexibility in coliving spaces > [Salto KS](#), [Cosine Labs](#), [Glide](#)

Booking Platforms: aggregators of coliving spaces to increase lead acquisition and overall bookings > [Anyplace](#), [Young Global Living](#), [Coliving.com](#), [Colivme](#),

Coliving Apps: further tools for members matching, resident engagement and cross-functionalities > [Whoomies](#), [Coliving App](#), [Bedvetter](#), [Ollie Living App](#), [Connect by Common](#), [The Collective Member App](#)

HYBRID TOOLS

Once you’ve tried out a few of these tools and want to test yourself to see if you’re a true CF expert, try combining a few of the tools to maximize communal bonding. For example you could have a Dragon Dreaming (Community Design) or Sharing Circle (Personal/Professional Development) session during a Shared Meal (Communal Event/Ritual). Or maybe every other Community Assembly (Communal Event/Ritual) could end with a Mastermind session (Personal/Professional Development). Feel free to come up with your own. If you come up with a new hybrid event that you’d like to share with us, please fill out [this short form](#) and we might include it in a future edition of this handbook!



ENDING WORDS

Our modern way of living has been causing deep disconnection on many levels. People are craving to feel more love and belonging. We believe coliving can pave the path towards a new living paradigm that fosters a true culture of connection. Building community and authentic connection can be challenging. But creating strong communal experiences is possible, even at scale. With the right community building approaches the community facilitator can be empowered to take on a central role in enhancing the community and brand experience.

Creating internal processes and positions that allow your community to flourish is key not only because “community” is a promise that operators give to their future residents, but especially because a strong communal experience is key to the long-term success of operators. The impact of the community experience on brand value, retention, savings in acquisitions and contributions from engaged residents cannot be neglected. When authentic community is not developed or maintained, operators will be confronted with that reality and may have to pivot fast if they don't want their brand to be associated with little or no community at all.

We wrote this handbook because we passionately believe that the power of community is what will enable coliving businesses - and their members - to flourish. From our past roles as community builders - whether running our own coliving spaces, working with major coliving companies on their community experiences, or facilitating sharing circles around the world - we have seen that this topic is not talked about or documented enough; and this needs to change.

Exploring and explaining the role of the operator and of the community facilitator has been a priority for us. Our hope is that this handbook will be an inspiration for you in how you shape your processes, job positions, and community building approach. We know that there is no one-size-fits-all community building approach: it has to be adapted to your vision, the desires and degree of responsibility of your residents, and your internal resource capacities. However, we hope that this book has given you the right mindset, approaches and tools to build community in a way that works best for both the operator and residents.

We will continue developing content around the art of community building. At the same time, we will work with leading coliving organisations who understand the value of community to help bring coliving operations, community, and overall brand experience to the next level.

What true coliving comes down to is authentic human connections. As you go on your community-building journey, we hope that you feel deeply rewarded by not only building a successful brand and business, but by bringing people together in a way that nourishes them.

May this bring the knowledge and stimulation that the coliving ecosystem needs to continue to grow and thrive.

From our community to yours,

The CF Handbook Team

By **Gui Perdrix**, Art of Co
And **Matt Lesniak** and **Naima Ritter**, Conscious Coliving

TELL US ABOUT YOUR STORY

How have you been able to use the CF Handbook methods and tools within your coliving spaces?

We'd love to hear from you.

Truth is, we didn't write this for ourselves. If this handbook has any value, then it lies in the change that it can create.

We genuinely believe, from first and second-hand experience, that the techniques, methods and mindsets elaborated in this handbook are key for building strong, resilient and engaged communities. And now they are here for you to be applied.

How has the CF approach changed your business?

Write us your story of what you changed in your approach and what changes it provoked.

Put the hashtag #CFhandbook and tag Conscious Coliving and Art of Co on your post (LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram) so that we can refeature you!

Enjoy the journey,

The CF Handbook team

PS: For any questions or support, just hit us up [here](#).

SUPPORTING YOU TO MAKE YOUR COMMUNITY FLOURISH

This handbook provides a framework and tools for community building and facilitation. To take these even further, Conscious Coliving and Art of Co are partnering up to provide a series of services to coliving operators and community builders including:

UPCOMING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

Develop your community facilitation skills with a series of virtual sessions covering the main learnings and tools from the CF Handbook.

BESPOKE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

Implement the Community Facilitation methodologies across your community or company through bespoke consulting and workshops with the authors of the CF Handbook.

BENEFITS:

- Connect with and learn from other community facilitators
- Learn new tools and improve your community facilitation skills
- Learn to spot and avoid common community-building mistakes
- Develop bespoke community strategies for both in-person and virtual communities
- Create higher engagement with your community and improve your customer experience

FIND OUT MORE:

consciouscoliving.com/community-development-support/



HOW CAN COLIVING OPERATORS CREATE LIFE-ENHANCING COLIVING SPACES AT SCALE?

After reading this handbook, you can also refer to one of the most awaited publications in the coliving sector, the Art of Coliving, by the co-author of this handbook Gui Perdrix. You can read more about it below:

Coliving is not a new way of living, but providing it as a service is a new industry. With the rise of the coliving industry in the last year, numerous entrepreneurs and developers are riding the wave of creating shared living environments, allowing residents the benefits of flexible housing and communal experiences.

But coliving is not a pure architectural product. It's outcome lies on the quality of the resident experience, which is tied to one key criteria of judgment: the quality of its community.

As a former coliving operator, Gui has run four different spaces in three continents. He has seen through his own eyes how coliving can be a motor of personal growth: residents finding their business partners, creating life-long friendships, and even finding purpose in their lives again through the quality of interactions they experienced.

A fundamental question arises for coliving operators and developers: how to create those life-enhancing experiences at scale?

Over the last two years, Gui has visited and interviewed more than 150 coliving spaces around the world to understand what influences such an experience. And the answer couldn't be found in one area only:

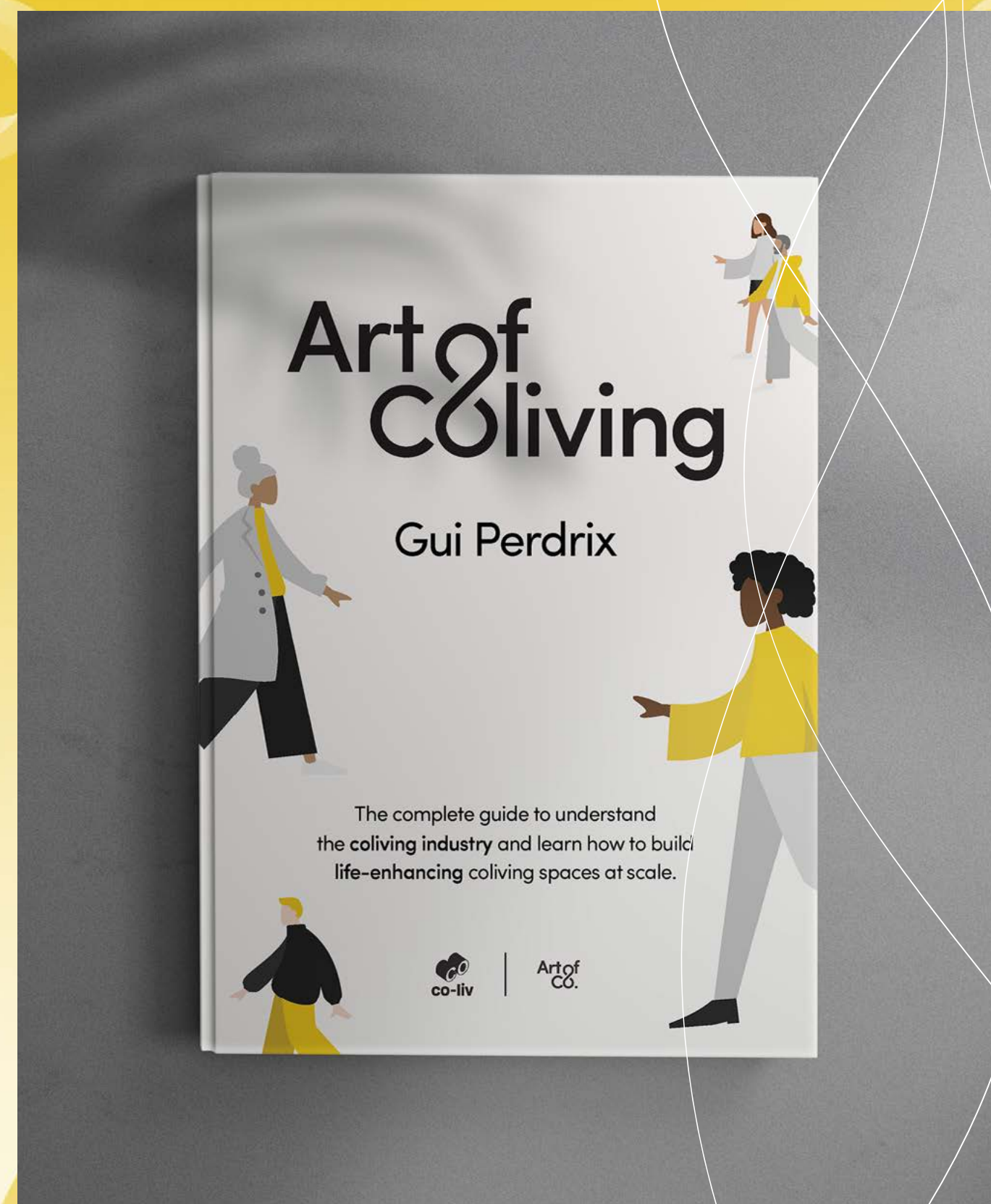
- Finding alignment between the **concept**, its communication and the actual marketing creates the right balance between expectations and reality
- Understanding how to think **architecture** and **interior design** creates the physical base for interactions and serendipity to occur
- Knowing how to find and vet the right **residents** is crucial for any stable community
- Implementing the right **community building approach** and understanding the role of the community facilitator is necessary in order to create the right processes that will lead to organic community creation
- Understanding the different types of **business models** and being able to overcome the dependency of pure rental models is what gives operators the freedom to invest and choose their coliving experiences
- Avoiding **legal** fallacies and overcoming current challenges is key to long-term success

The conclusion is that coliving is based on fundamental principles of thinking and doing. Creating strong coliving spaces and experiences is a science that can allow replicability. And yet, the art lies in adding your own differentiation on top of it and being able to apply it to each area of the coliving creation process.

Art of Coliving is a workbook, toolkit and encyclopedia answering the most asked question of the year 2020: how to build a space from A to Z which allows financial stability, operational excellence, while enabling the formation of strong human experiences at scale. At its core, it explores the tension between growth and community, and how coliving spaces can strive beyond current conceptual limitations.

Based on two years of research and with the insights from leading coliving players, it aims to give coliving professionals inspirational case studies, principles of thinking, and actionable tools to build the coliving spaces of the future.

In this book made for coliving professionals, from operators to developers, investors, community managers, architects, service innovators and the wider coliving ecosystem, readers will learn and understand how to create coliving spaces, what coliving is about, and how the current industry is going to evolve into the 21st century.



Pre-order the book now at www.artof.co/art-of-coliving-book.

FULFILLING THE FULL POTENTIAL OF **COMMUNITY** IS POSSIBLE



&



Conscious Coliving
MAKING COLIVING THRIVE

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