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Living and Sustainability: An Environmental Critique of Design and Building Practices, Locally and Globally

1. Paper / Proposal Title:

The role of co-building groups in creating sustainable buildings and neighbourhoods: Lessons from Freiburg in Germany

2. Format:

Written paper

3. Author(s) Name:

Arian Mahzouni

4. University or Company Affiliation:

-The KTH School of Architecture and the Built Environment, Stockholm

-Visiting researcher at Institute of Environmental Social Sciences and Geography, University of Freiburg, Germany

5. Abstract (300 words):

The City of Freiburg in South-west Germany is internationally recognized for its success in urban sustainability transitions, in particular, regarding the planning and construction of two sustainable city districts of Rieselfeld and Vauban in the 1990s. The role of co-building groups (as non-commercial developers) in providing an alternative to existing housing industry have been widely recognized (cf. Spering, 1999; Ornetzeder &

Rohracher, 2006; Bradsky et al., 2008; Scheurer & Newman, 2009). However, no consistent evidence about the role of co-building groups in urban sustainability has been provided. This paper will provide an in-depth analysis of the multi-functional role of co-building groups in contributing to sustainable neighbourhoods including social, economic and ecological aspects. It will combine insights from the fields of institutional entrepreneurship (cf. DiMaggio, 1988; Phillips et al., 2004; Battilana et al., 2009) and urban studies to examine if and how co-building groups are able to mobilize resources for enhancing social stability, offering affordable housing, and institutionalising green building practices. Institutional entrepreneurs can be individuals, organizations or groups of organizations who try to mobilize resources with the aim of creating “new or transform existing institutions” (Battilana et al., 2009:68). This study will use a comparative case study of the co-building groups in the city districts of Rieselfeld and Vauban. Only in Rieselfeld there are 120 co-building groups, *Baugemeinschaften* in German (Back, 2011:2).

6. Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Arian Mahzouni holds a BSc and MSc in Organization and Management Studies both from Stockholm University and a PhD in Spatial Planning from Technical University of Dortmund, Germany. He has recently finalized his three year post-doctoral research project entitled “Governance of Low Carbon Socio-technical Transitions”, in which a comparative case study of residential buildings in the cities of Stockholm (Sweden) and Freiburg (Germany) was conducted to offer a better insight into territorially-bounded factors (planning policy framework, institutional structure and actor constellation) for urban energy transition across Europe. His current research deals with energy transition in the built environment in Switzerland, which addresses different lock-ins (e.g. institutional, technological, and behavioral) as main barriers to energy efficiency in existing buildings.