

Cities, Communities and Homes: Is the Urban Future Livable?

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

Urban Collective Living Arrangements – False Promise or Golden Key to Sustainable Communities?

- **Format:**

Written paper and verbal presentation

- **Author(s) Name:**

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- **University or Company Affiliation:**

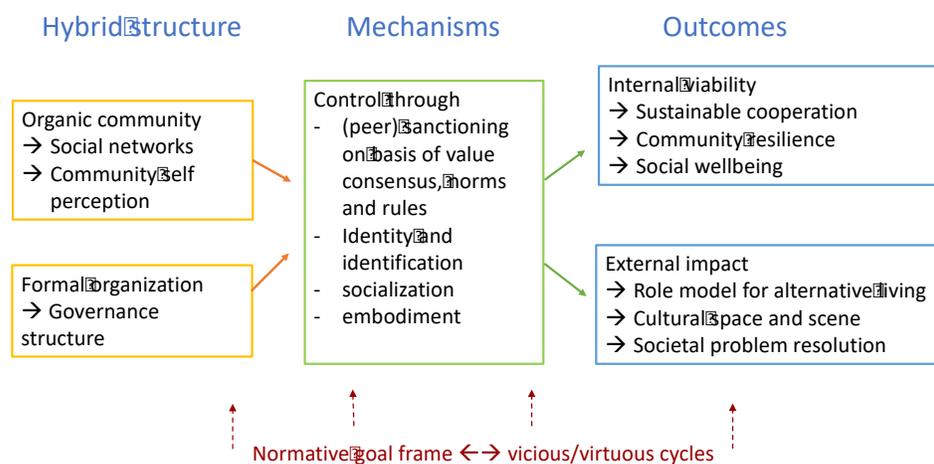
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- **Abstract (300 words):**

Many propagate *Urban Collective Living Arrangements* (UCLAs) as the golden key to sustainable communities of the future. Major global trends of single-person households, loneliness, and patchwork families pose potential threats to individual well-being and social cohesion. Policy makers often see alternative living arrangements as a remedy. UCLAs, so the argument, provide the social capital facilitating not only mutual support among its members, but also active contributions to civil society.

UCLAs are intentional communities in an urban context, based on voluntary membership beyond kinship ties, a strong emphasis on sharing (e.g. space, food, childcare), and a strong group identity. Future resident's and policy makers' increasing interest notwithstanding, systematic evidence on their internal viability and external impact is scarce. Why do some of these initiatives succeed and thrive over long periods of time, whereas others fall into decay and collapse? Under which conditions do they strengthen or weaken the sustainability of their social environment?

To answer such questions, we employ a social mechanisms approach in our ethnographic study of big UCLAs, developing a theory of social control for hybrid forms between community and organization, aiming at the explanation of the variation in the viability of UCLAs. As we observe a hybrid structure in UCLAs, consisting of an organic community where social relations between members are central, and of formal organizational structures, we intend to transfer knowledge from organization science to the realm of communities. We propose that this hybrid blend brings forward different mechanisms of control that structure and regulate social interaction to reach desired outcomes of sustainable UCLAs (see Figure).



• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Louisa A. Firnenburg is a Research Master Student at the Interuniversity Center for Social Science Theory and Methodology. In her bachelor thesis, she developed a sustainability monitor for the Northern Dutch region, the Easy-Tool, monitoring the development of the ecological, social and economic domain in the region. In her master thesis, she investigates the potential contribution of urban living communities to social sustainability. She is currently also writing a PhD-proposal on this subject. The author holds a scholarship by the prestigious German Academic Scholarship foundation.