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In search of 'a chosen community'
A study on self-initiated co-housing projects in Berlin

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Abstract

This study explores *Baugruppen* co-housing communities in Berlin. In comparison to the general focus on economic and environmental development objectives, socially sustainable goals remain unclear. This thesis focusses on how co-housing residents initiate and fulfil their co-housing goals. It also considers how urban co-housing as a regeneration project aimed to strengthen social cohesion relates to discussions about city development and issues of gentrification. I examine the concept of social sustainability in *Baugruppen* co-housing projects through critical theories, in order to understand how social sustainability is experienced by members of the co-housing projects. Co-housing initiatives are regarded by city authorities in Berlin as solutions to issues of demographic change and urban expansion. I have found that the co-housing projects do not include equal opportunities for residents of different socioeconomic groups. My fieldwork investigates *Baugruppen* co-housing through observation and interviews with residents, focussing on how views are expressed by the initiators of the communities and how the communities relate to diversity. As such it is a descriptive thesis, which aims to give the reader insight into the changes which are taking place in Berlin.

Keywords: *social anthropology, social sustainability, co-housing, cohousing, Baugruppen, gentrification, Berlin*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Berlin has a dramatic history - war, destruction and the division of East and West. This has had a large impact on the development in the city and its housing scene. After the fall of the Wall (1989), local housing culture has grown from vacant housing lots (LaFond 2016), especially in former Eastern parts of the city. In these parts of the city densification has been important in order to reconstruct destitute areas. The availability of cheap land and innovative building projects is unique to Berlin compared to other European capitals, as are experimental dwellings. However, economic growth in the last decade and changes in the city have resulted in a housing shortage and escalating rents and prices on the housing market (Berlin Hyp 2016). This has undeniably made it difficult for lower-income city dwellers. Tension between city dwellers has arisen with locals reacting against privatization of property and the gentrification of former Eastern neighbourhoods.

The changes in the city have also created a demand for new housing. In this context, people with financial resources are directing their own housing initiatives in order to live as they wish. Some choose co-housing as a suitable form of living in Berlin's inner-city. In Germany co-housing projects are commonly administered by *Baugruppen* (building groups). *Baugruppen* co-housing projects are achieved through cost-effective building methods, usually in collaboration with real estate developers and architects. Their organization consists of a small-scale sharing economy which often entails reduced living costs for its members, an environmental awareness and mutual help. In the context of urban expansion, co-housing is described as a possible solution to the changes in the housing market and the growing population. It is also emphasised by the local urban development office¹ as an innovative idea which will work in line with the city's objectives of sustainability, inclusion and affordability (Stattbau 2012/2015:7).

While the local urban development office in the city encourages self-administered and privately financed housing projects, public policies which are supporting housing initiatives of good quality are lacking (Droste 2015:80). Furthermore, the population in

¹ In Berlin, the planning authorities are known as the Senate for Urban Development.

the *Baugruppen* co-housing projects is not representative of the majority of residents in the city. In my view, if socioeconomic groups of lower status remain underrepresented in co-housing (Suckow 2009:19-20, 22-23) and the projects are built on convenience and financial status yet considered a solution to the issues in the city, they are not fully developed in their social sustainability yet. This is especially if a plan for social sustainability and inclusion in the communities is not practiced. The average monthly earning of each *Baugruppen* co-housing resident in Berlin is estimated to be 3500-5000 euros (Suckow 2009:19-20). Residents are usually well-educated and many work in creative industries and the cultural sector (2009:24). Moreover, the entry into a *Baugruppe* co-housing project requires a long-term financial and social commitment, and connections to people through the “right” social network.

In view of this, the city’s plan for inclusion involves promoting inter-generational co-housing projects (Stattbau 2012/2015:7) that house people of different age groups and thereby increase social cohesion through diversity. However, while objectives of economic and environmental sustainability are often prioritized when planning housing projects, goals for social sustainability are not fully formulated. A wider formula for social inclusion is not developed and has not been applied to co-housing projects to assess their diversity. In this thesis I will argue that diversity based on socioeconomic class is important for social sustainability.

In anthropology, the topic of housing has been approached from a variety of perspectives, but co-housing as dwelling alternatives for the middle-class has not been specifically addressed. Geographer and anthropologist David Harvey (2008; 2012), who usually writes on themes of social justice and urbanization from a Marxist perspective, has researched the unfair conditions in the growth of cities, and how market conditions have led to the state of urban division we are in today. Moreover, he has illustrated how social movements grow in neoliberal housing climates, and how city dwellers mobilize to oppose the established rules for a “right to the city” (2012).

A study from a critical viewpoint where the issues with co-housing are explored, and which includes residents’ point of view can contribute to an understanding of what role

urban co-housing has in the city. The communities can be further understood in their organization and in their representation on issues related to diversity and variety in their population. This includes co-housing residents, their neighbourhoods but also city dwellers who are reacting towards their proliferation. Moreover, experiencing the communities from an outsider's perspective can reveal how the projects relate to the city, and how their role in gentrification processes can be perceived.

In the coming chapters I explore the views of the co-housing residents, and the impact that their projects may have on the development of the inner parts of the city.

Aim and framing of research questions

There are many aspects of co-housing worth researching. This study is a contribution to the field of anthropology on co-housing projects, their part in increased privatisation and perceived divisions in the city. The purpose of this study is to describe a couple of co-housing projects in Berlin to assess how they were founded and which goals were important for these initiatives. I want to explore how the co-housing residents live their everyday lives and how they regard their collective housing in relation to their ideas of collectivism. I will describe who the co-housing residents are and what kind of support they received and are still receiving from the city planning authorities. It is of interest to see what resources the co-housing residents have and how these resources contribute to the possibility of choosing this form of collective living.

Finally, I want to put the co-housing projects in relation to the social objectives of the city's development, which means that I am interested in finding out whether co-housing residents are working to be inclusive communities.

I will answer the following main questions:

- How do *Baugruppen* co-housing residents initiate and organise their communities?
- How do the co-housing residents perceive their projects in relation to their neighbourhoods and the city?
- What role does social class have in the creation of the co-housing projects?

- What drives the co-housing communities to become diverse and which factors restrict them?

Notes on theory, method and material

An important issue here is whether *Baugruppen* communities can be regarded as socially sustainable contributions to the city in their current co-housing model. Construction costs and high rents are economic restrictions which make the projects accessible only to those who have sufficient financial resources. Another restriction is the self-managed admittance of new members by co-housing residents. To get an understanding of how the projects are seen to contribute to the city, I will explore them with the use of Saffron Woodcraft's (2012, 2014) definition of social sustainability which I describe in chapter 2. The discussion of the projects in the current housing situation will be made with Elisabeth Lilja (2011) and David Harvey (2012). This will also be defined more in detail in chapter 2.

Since *Baugruppen* co-housing projects are built on a combination of collective and individualistic principles but are still market-based communities, I will argue that social values like solidarity and collectivist thinking are not that strong. This could in fact have a divisive impact on the goal to achieve social sustainability in cities. However, this is not the only factor which could create division. On the one hand the co-housing projects are relatively few² and therefore their impact on the city is not that big. On the other hand, co-housing projects are part of an accelerating gentrification trend, which co-housing residents find difficult to evade. Although the concept of self-initiated co-housing projects and their label 'sustainable' can be contradicting, I will argue that *Baugruppen* co-housing projects are being developed as a result of the current conditions of the housing market.

To answer the research questions, I use material gathered from ethnographic fieldwork I have conducted in Berlin. It illustrates the co-housing projects and the informants in their views, their choices and their motivations for choosing this form of housing. What

² In Berlin, there is estimated to be around 500 buildings in total out of all housing stock (Lopez 2016:23).

interests me most about the material I have acquired is that it shows many perspectives regarding the issue of housing shortage from different people and sources. There is not one answer in how to solve an issue like housing shortage. The fieldwork in Berlin thus gives new insights on the topic of co-housing and its role in the city. To further understand the current model of co-housing and how it has developed. I will also rely on previous research of co-housing, which I will account for in chapter 2 (and 3). The use of theory, method and material is demonstrated in the empirical chapters with the use of extracts from the interviews and field descriptions.

Disposition of thesis

In **Chapters 2 and 3** I will describe how I have used theory and methodology to come to my conclusions. Thereafter, the structure of this study is divided into two empirical chapters; **Chapter 4** is a presentation of the co-housing projects, their functions and organisation. **Chapter 5** is more focused on the co-housing projects and their place in the city in the current housing situation. I will include comments at the end of each chapter. After the empirical chapters, I will include final conclusions on my findings. I will detail the empirical chapters below.

Chapter 4 explores how co-housing works on an everyday basis and how residents organise their communities. The co-housing buildings I have visited are introduced in their environments and their form of tenure. The co-housing buildings are further explored inside to give an insight into the design which is meant to foster social interaction between residents. The communities are also described in regards to their degree of communality and participation. Residents describe their view of themselves, and their admittance process and I use the concept ‘the creative class’ (Richard Florida 2002) to explain the formation of the co-housing projects. The chapter is partly based on observations and descriptions of the co-housing buildings that I have visited and aims to give context to the discussion in chapters 6.

Chapter 5 illustrates the challenges with co-housing arising from the growth of the city and its increasingly market-based direction of housing. I will describe how the city of Berlin and gentrification are important factors in the rise of *Baugruppen* co-housing. The

co-housing residents explain their views on their co-housing projects in relation to the city. I also include the perspective of people in the city that resist changes and demonstrate why *Baugruppen* co-housing projects are targets for criticism. I will discuss how co-housing relates to issues of gentrification in a larger perspective and how co-housing residents are affected in this situation.

In **Conclusions** I reflect on how my findings add to the debate about urban co-housing and the city's development. I explore what my findings about residents in self-initiated co-housing projects say about the concept of co-housing and its supposed contribution to sustainable urban development.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

Baugruppen co-housing is considered important for the city and its growth (Stattbau 2012/2015:7). In this chapter I explain the concepts I use to discuss co-housing and its contribution to the city. However, first I will describe co-housing in a research context, where previous views are presented. This is to give insight into why it is a topic that attracts opposing standpoints.

A literature review of co-housing

The term ‘co-housing’ is an umbrella term which can be used to describe housing characterized by collaborative, communal or collective components (Vestbro in Krokfors 2012:309, Vestbro & Horelli 2011:1). It can be defined as a spectrum of collaborative living, ranging from squats and occupied housing to *Baugruppen* co-housing with full ownership of property and only a modest focus on the communal aspect, as well as a range of hybrids in between. In a brochure about collaborative living in Berlin, a co-housing project is described as “affiliations of different parties who want to live jointly in a house or an apartment, whether as owners, occupiers with a right of permanent use, or tenants” (Stattbau 2012/2015:111). From these descriptions, it comprises a broad range of housing. Since there is a large variety of co-housing communities with different forms of tenure and legal entities (McCamant & Durrett 2011: 227-228) I concentrate on inner-city buildings run by a housing association consisting of a group of individuals who co-own the land. In Germany they are called *Baugruppen* (building groups).

The “birthplace” for co-housing is usually said to be Denmark (Bertil Egerö 2014:1) and also mentioned as the place where the concept of *bofællesskab* was founded in the late 1960s (2014:3). By definition, *bofællesskab* constituted both a form of publicly funded and privately owned housing (Egerö 2014:2). It was partly initiated in opposition to institutions (2014: ibid, Sargisson 2012:32) and proliferated at the fringes of society where it had little influence on the predominating institutional structures (2014:3). Particularly in Scandinavia (Denmark and Sweden), co-housing was realised with the help of social housing providers (Stephen Hill 2016:6) and often rented and publicly owned (Egerö 2014:6). Some of the incentives behind co-housing projects was to achieve egalitarian

living standards (Vestbro & Horelli 2011:4) and provide housing which facilitated the balance between work inside and outside the home (Sargisson 2012:33). Thereby, the communities were often focused on collectivism with ideals of socialist utopias, but the initiatives were not necessarily ideological (2012:33). Despite a lack of clear ideology, they were "...generally proactive in supporting the disadvantaged, particularly the homeless, single parents and low-income students" (Meltzer in Sargisson 2012:33).

The concept of *bofällenskap* inspired American architects Charles Durrett and Kathryn McCamant (Vestbro & Horelli 2011:2) who brought it to the United States in the 1980's (Krokfors 2012:313) where they developed it and it grew in popularity. Since then a number of co-housing projects of a later model have proliferated in Europe in countries as varied as England (Tummers 2016:2033-34), the Netherlands (2016: *ibid*), Sweden (Kärnekull 2011) and as the focus of this study, in parts in Germany as a result of *Baugruppen* (Droste 2015:79, Jarvis 2016:8). Compared to their historical counterparts, new co-housing projects are defined by similar ideals and collectivist philosophies but they are also in much higher part focused on the individual needs of their residents (Sargisson 2012:47). They are now also more common in cities.

The rise of urban co-housing is debated by politicians, urban planners, architects, professors, journalists and inhabitants of the city from different angles. The different angles are mirrored in the views on co-housing which I have found in literature, which vary from an emphasis on its advantages and potential to contribute to cities' urban development (Krokfors 2012, Vestbro 2012, Droste 2015), to a more recent and critical stance taken by scholars suggesting that they might create 'gated communities' (Chiodelli & Baglione 2014) and create class-based division in neighbourhoods and thereby also to gentrification (Andrej Holm 2010). In general, the literature is characterized by ambiguous stances, which shows contradicting views on co-housing and its possibility for the future, and regarding its properties of sustainability.

A large focus in literature is on how co-housing can be beneficial for aging populations (Labit 2015; Jolanki & Vilkkö 2015; Pedersen 2015; Andresen & Runge 2002). For instance, as a shared housing model, inter-generational co-housing where several age

groups sustain their community for mutual help and benefits is gaining ground in research (Coele 2014; McCamant & Durrett 2011:9-10). Similarly, as urban co-housing is on the rise as an intentional form of living (Lidewij Tummers 2015) the research on the topic is growing too (2015: *ibid*).

In the local context of Berlin as a growing city, Andrej Holm (2010) views *Baugruppen* projects as part of an evolution which will accommodate mostly the German middle-class and possibly lead to an increase in segregation and a rise in rents in urban areas. Along similar lines, Christiane Droste (2015) claims that "...the evidence for long-term sustainability and community effects [of co-housing] remains relatively weak concerning socially weaker groups, and so far does not yet offer a sound basis for a public policy decision to 'mainstream' co-housing" (2015:80). Here co-housing is described as lacking in strength to support vulnerable groups, and there is an on-going discussion of how to improve the current model. Moreover, rental alternatives to private co-housing are said to not be highlighted enough to increase a chance of just, affordable housing (2015:81) and it is a current topic of the international debate (2015: *ibid*). The discussion surrounding the co-housing projects shows that they are under question for not being inclusive enough to the general population.

Francesco Chiodelli and Valeria Baglione (2014) argue that "...co-housing shares its constitutive characteristics with privately governed residential communities of other kinds (such as retirement communities and gated communities, among others)" (2014:1) and that "it [co-housing] may be interpreted as a part of a (global) trend towards homeowners association" (*ibid*: 1). They describe modern co-housing projects as similar to other private residential communities which are managed by residents (2014:24) that at times are creating "enclaves" (2014:23-24) for higher socioeconomic and cultural groups (2014: *ibid*). Demonstrated here is that co-housing initiatives are potentially creating barriers, and it is indicated that there are underlying implications which come with the increase of private, co-owned co-housing. What is suggested is that despite their social emphasis, tendencies to create social barriers still exist that are not necessarily good for the entire urban society (Droste 2015:81).

Nevertheless, there is still a notable share of research which emphasises co-housing as positive contributions to the city (Tummers 2015:1). Some traits of co-housing mentioned in literature include the capacity to increase collaborative consumption if a building is designed in a certain way (Vestbro 2012), improve gender-related issues by relieving women of housework burdens (Vestbro & Horelli 2011), reduce urban sprawl through densification (Bresson & Denèfle 2015:12; Rueff 2012:2-3) and as related to the aim of this thesis, to contribute to inclusive urban development (Christiane Droste 2015), sustainable cities (Karin Krokfors 2012; Vestbro 2012; Tummers 2015) and neighbourhood integration (Droste 2015; Krokfors 2012:312; Stattbau 2012/15; Dorit Fromm 2012; Tummers 2015:8). Additionally, co-housing is believed to “...be the answer for many people who desire a higher quality of life in *affordable* housing that the government and the market cannot provide!” (Kadriu 2011:2, my italics). As a matter of fact, terms like “affordable” and “sustainable” are notably used to describe co-housing, but are not clarified as relative measurements nor explicitly stated to which societal class they are directed. This obscures the fact that residents with a lower than average income and educational background are absent from the projects (Suckow 2009).

In a document from a workshop about co-housing projects (Kadriu 2011), they are described as reflecting “...general trends towards further democratizations of European cities, through which citizens expect their “rights to the city” include the opportunity to help design and manage the local environment” (2011:2). In this context, city residents are predicted to define what the future of urban housing will be, and self-management is not just considered a privilege, but a right.

In anthropology, urban research has mainly been conducted through referencing fields of geography, architecture, history and sociology (Low 1996:384). In Setha Low’s view, this makes the field “undertheorized” (Low 1996:383) despite having had an impact on literature and issues related to cities such as immigration and poverty (1996:384). What I have found on urban research in anthropology has predominantly been concentrated to non-Western contexts. However, with the rapid growth of cities and large-scale demographic changes over the years, anthropology is expanding to study urban issues more frequently (Rivke & de Koning & 2016:2-3) which Low (1996) has contributed to,

specifically in the practice of theorizing space and place (1996; 2014). In critical urban theory, David Harvey (2012) covers a range of topics from urbanization and neoliberalism to squats (2012:20), lack of affordable housing and gentrification (2012: *ibid*) and, like Setha Low (2001:46), the transformation of public space to private arenas which reduce access to minorities (Harvey 2012:72-73).

Although there is research conducted on housing culture in anthropology by Setha Low (2001) and David Harvey (2012), who is perhaps more known as a critical theorist, there are not that many studies which focus on the factors which make co-housing projects in big cities unique. Anthropologist Joshua Lockyer (2007) claims in a study of eco-villages that intentional communities are expressing a form of “cultural critique” (Lockyer 2007:2) towards Western capitalist societies in their choice of living together and that they are reacting to capitalist market structures in industrial society (2007: *ibid*). The creation of such collaborative housing models can be interpreted as an aim for their residents to show that there are better alternatives of housing and ways of life. In order to understand what connects co-housing residents in cities, I want to explore how important class and financial resources are for the formation of *Baugruppen* co-housing projects and how those factors characterise their organisations. I will explore the case of *Baugruppen* co-housing by referencing previous research about co-housing. I will primarily use Chiodelli & Baglione (2014), McCamant & Durrett (2011), Droste (2015) and Suckow (2009). From their findings I will draw parallels to the co-housing projects I have studied. I will provide an insight into these co-housing projects in their neighbourhoods with empirical data and discuss whether there are aspects in my findings which contrast views from previous research.

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The polarising views on co-housing suggest that it is a field which could use further research. In order to describe how I have perceived the role that co-housing has in the city I will analyse the communities by using the concept of social sustainability. Anthropologist Saffron Woodcraft (2012) approaches social sustainability in cities from different angles and discusses why it has been difficult to use as a concept. In chapter 4

when describing and analysing how co-housing communities work in practice I will rely on her writings and on the concept of ‘the creative class’ by Richard Florida (2002). This is to explore how social class in the co-housing communities is expressed and perceived by their residents. In chapter 5 I explore how the co-housing residents view themselves in the midst of gentrification processes and rising rents. This is to illustrate what their point of view is on the role of co-housing in the city. In order to do so I will rely on Elisabeth Lilja (2011), David Harvey (2012) and previous writings on co-housing by Andrej Holm (2010) and Christiane Droste (2015).

A critical perspective on co-housing

Social sustainability in cities is a concept which is used with aims to create better conditions for social relationships and increase social capital (Woodcraft 2011:31-32). It has been applied to several areas in society, often coupled with environmental and economic goals (Manoochehri 2016:326). In urban development and housing it has been used on a policy level (2015:325) and on a grassroots level. Some of the areas of use are improvements in infrastructure and housing for liveability (Woodcraft et al. 2011:16), increasing neighbourhood interaction and building housing with adjacent amenities (Woodcraft & Dixon 2013:475). It has been linked to values of social justice (Foley 2004), democracy and equity (Manoochehri 2016:325).

Saffron Woodcraft (2014) describes social sustainability as “...a process for creating sustainable, successful places that promote well-being by understanding what people need from the places in which they live and work.” (2014:133). This is a very broad definition of social sustainability. However, this definition also describes the importance of being near people that are using and living in the city to understand what areas need improvement and which groups need extra attention.

In Woodcraft’s view, there are three issues which challenge the use of social sustainability. They are all issues which are relevant to illustrate when approaching the goals of social sustainability in co-housing:

- The concept itself is not defined enough in order to be applied to concrete cases (Davoudi et. al in Woodcraft 2012:30).
- There is a lack of unity regarding its objectives, an issue which is anchored in different political stances on what kind of city is being strived for (2012:30).
- There is a general precedence of focusing on economic and environmental growth in urban planning over the social aspect of sustainability (Woodcraft 2013:473, 2014:133). In contrast to economic and environmental sustainability, social sustainability is difficult to measure (Woodcraft et al. 2011:6-7) and thereby also more difficult to implement and evaluate 2011:6-7).

In line with the last issue described here, co-housing today is similarly focused on the three pillars of sustainability; economic, social and environmental. However, economic and environmental goals can sometimes be given more attention than social sustainability (2013:473, 2014:133). The social aspect of sustainability is implicit and expected in co-housing because it is built on a constitution of sharing and collaboration between residents. In a study of co-housing France, it is implied that co-housing communities are based on “strong collectives of residents” (Bresson & Denèfle 2015:5) and that they consist of residents who are working towards the same goals. However, from what I have experienced in the co-housing communities in Berlin, the image of close connections between residents is not always mirrored in reality. I will discuss this further in chapter 4.

In Woodcraft’s view, the issue of social sustainability in urban development is problematic because it is not clear “who and what is being sustained” (Woodcraft 2012:32). This view is central to my questioning of social sustainability as it is used in relation to co-housing. To create a city which takes human needs into consideration, Woodcraft (2012) argues that we need a radical application of sustainability in planning to reconsider “...the linkages between social experience, urban development, economic growth and ecological systems” (2012:33). This rethinking can make a difference in the discussion about sustainable cities as places where people want to live, to place where people actually *can* live (2012:33). This means that the discussion on social sustainability should also concern affordability and inhabitants’ financial capacities to stay in the city (2012: *ibid*). In housing in general, and thereby also in co-housing, as this discussion is not fully developed yet.

Finally, Weingaertner & Moberg (2014) describe the concept of social sustainability as context dependent (2014:2). This points to the “elasticity” (Woodcraft 2012:30) of social sustainability as a concept and shows that it can be used in different ways to suit different purposes (2012:30). I will approach the topic of social sustainability in this thesis as a concept which needs to be reviewed and analysed by taking time, place and surroundings into consideration. In the case of this study, I am looking at factors in Berlin which are important in assessing goals, and the areas where the co-housing buildings are located.

Assessing the criteria for inclusive and socially diverse co-housing

Inclusion and diversity are factors which are important to discuss in relation to co-housing. Therefore I will explore them in relation to the co-housing communities and their admittance process of new co-housing residents. Social inclusion (“and eradication of exclusion”) (Woodcraft & Dixon 2013:474) is mentioned by Woodcraft & Dixon (2013) as a subsidiary objective of social sustainability in cities (2013:474). I will explore whether the co-housing buildings are suited for people of different socioeconomic backgrounds. Inclusion in co-housing is more commonly described as a goal which is not usually reached (Droste 2015, Chiodelli & Baglione 2014, Andrej Holm 2010). There is a diversity of *types* of co-housing buildings, from elderly co-housing (Labit 2015; Jolanki & Vilkkö 2015; Pedersen 2015; Andresen & Runge 2002) to LGBTQ co-housing³ and in Berlin, even for refugees⁴. However, as previous research on *Baugruppen* suggests (Suckow 2009), the current population living and initiating the co-housing projects are predominantly German nuclear families (2009:3). Therefore, I will evaluate social diversity in the communities. The point of this is to see if the residents are working towards broadening their populations.

Typically social diversity in populations means different categories of people: different ethnicities, religions, sexual minorities and people with different class-backgrounds. In co-housing, diversity commonly consists of different age groups. In the *Baugruppen* co-

³ Tonic Housing. See <http://www.tonichousing.org.uk>. Village Hearth Cohousing. see <http://www.villagehearthcohousing.com/>

⁴ Refugio. See <http://www.refugio.berlin/>

housing communities it is in the form of inter-generational living where three age groups live together (Coele 2014; McCamant & Durrett 2011:9-10). Mixing generations is believed to be beneficial because each age group can help each other in a variety of activities (Coele 2014). In the buildings I have visited this includes childcare, animal care and other social “services”. In general, this means mutual help when it is needed. Advantages for the elderly are that they will be less alone as they age and that they will be able to do so in a safer place (Coele 2014:75). Children will have other children to play with and single parents and single households will be alleviated in everyday situations.

A diverse population in urban environments is described by Woodcraft (et al. 2011) as positive for the neighbourhood and as part of building good social relations (2011: 32). It is a common approach to plan for ‘mixed communities’ in new developments (Woodcraft 2011:32) and this important to account for. However, I will argue that there is another dimension to diversity which is important and that is to create conditions for the city as a place where people actually can live (Woodcraft 2012:33). Even if housing is planned for diverse groups and populations, this is not necessarily an outcome which is achieved. In regards to co-housing, this is an important factor to discuss since the residents choose who they want to live with and manage their own admittance process (Chiodelli & Baglione 2014:21). I will argue that in order for the co-housing projects to be more aligned to the city authorities’ goals of sustainability and inclusivity (Stattbau 2012/2015:7), inclusion should also be a goal which considers socioeconomic variety. Social class is a factor which is often overlooked in goals for social sustainability. This is possibly because it is a difficult topic to approach and goal to implement. I will approach this issue with empirical material in chapter 6.

Co-housing and its place in the city

I have now stated that I am referring to social diversity as a goal for social sustainability (Woodcraft et al. 2011:32). In co-housing, diversity can be achieved by working on social inclusion. However, creating a diverse population in co-housing is not always easy. Therefore the goal to achieve diversity in co-housing has to be viewed and evaluated from what can be perceived as obstacles. If the co-housing projects are new buildings of high construction quality and located centrally, as with those visited, they can exclude lower-

income residents. The co-housing residents can choose to seclude themselves from their neighbourhoods through their self-sufficiency and autonomy (Chiodelli & Baglione 2014:21). This can lead to segregation (Low 2001:45) and clusters of high-income people in certain areas of the city (Droste 2015:82). In general, residential segregation and ‘enclave’ societies are not viewed as a positive evolution. They are associated with lessened possibilities for social mobility (Turner 2007:290) and more ethnic and social divides (2007:294).

Moreover, there are aspects in the city which challenge inclusion in co-housing regardless of what the residents choose to do in the process of admitting new members. Economic growth in cities usually attracts the influx of new, well-endowed city residents who are equipped to handle the competitive nature of the housing market (Lilja 2011:28-29). In many ways, this description is true for the co-housing residents I have met and the general profile of residents in *Baugruppen* co-housing (Suckow 2009). However, they are also part of a much larger group of residents that are changing the conditions in the city through investments in housing. To understand how accumulated capital affects lower middle-class neighbourhoods on structural levels, Elisabeth Lilja (2011) describes gentrification with different approaches (2011:28-29). These three are important in this study:

- The rent gap theory (also known as the economic approach) which suggests that when residents of socioeconomic status move into previously under-privileged neighbourhoods and make investments in that area, low-income residents are forced to move out due to an increase in rents (2011:28).
- Cultural gentrification, which signifies that new cultural norms are set in neighbourhoods by the new capital-strong dominant class and previous inhabitants have to adapt to the new order due to inferior social, cultural and economic capital (2011:28). Examples of changes in the neighbourhood caused by the new residents can be different fashion, trends and art which suddenly become popular (2011:33-34).
- Super-gentrification, which is the most recent phase of gentrification with similar patterns of locals having to leave the neighbourhood, but which occurs through global foreign investment in up-and-coming neighbourhoods (2011:29-30). The investors do

not have to be from the same city, or even country as the place where these processes occur. This part of gentrification is a result of increased globalisation (2011:30).

In the process where cities become more gentrified, co-housing residents and their projects are only a small part of housing and of the population (Chiodelli & Baglione 2014:21). Their impact on the city as a whole should therefore not be exaggerated. However, a broader discussion about co-housing and their role in the city is important because the co-housing residents belong to streams of gentrification processes (Holm 2010). Furthermore, they are capable of utilising the current market and the space where they build their projects to its fullest potential due to their cultural capital (Lilja 2011:28). In the case of *Baugruppen* in Berlin, the trend is to settle the projects in former Eastern areas (Suckow 2009:26). The locations that the residents choose and what they are believed to do to the areas is also the main criticism which is directed towards co-housing communities in Berlin (Andrej Holm 2010). This will be described further in chapter 5.

However, I will start by discussing the importance of social class in the creation of co-housing in chapter 4. In this context I will also introduce the concept of ‘the creative class’ (Florida 2002).

When approaching the co-housing projects and their place in Berlin, ‘The right to the city’ is a concept which I will use mostly in chapter 5 in order to illustrate how the changes in Berlin have affected residents with less resources. ‘The right to the city’ was originally coined by Henri Lefebvre (1968) and developed by David Harvey (2012). As part of critical urban theory it suggests that a more just and fair form of urbanization is possible than what has existed thus far (Brenner 2009:198, Marcuse 2009:185). In Harvey’s view, the conditions in the city create uneven access to housing for lower-income residents (Harvey 2008:24). As such, “the right to the city” describes the collective struggle to get a position in the city (Harvey 2012:3). Harvey’s writings describe issues related to social justice and equity. These are values which are usually associated with social sustainability. He is an important figure in anthropology (and geography) and his view of the city has influenced parts of this thesis and my perspective at the field.

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My aim with using the concepts I have just described is to make it clearer if there are any goals with *Baugruppen* co-housing outside of their small communities. I will discuss gentrification as described by Lilja (2011) in relation to co-housing because it is a topic that is regarded as an issue in Berlin (Andrej Holm 2010). It is also a topic which I will illustrate with empirical material from interviews with the residents where they express their point of view on their co-housing communities in the city. Lilja's explanation of gentrification shows that those who are most capable are those who are able to achieve the most in the city. This is similar to Harvey's view on how the development of cities is dependent on capital (Harvey 2008:24) and the groups of people who use it.

In view of how these concepts illustrate important topics which are demonstrated in the empirical chapters, I have used an ethnographic method to explore the co-housing projects and their residents in Berlin. This is to further understand the co-housing residents' point of view, and see what they are actually capable of changing in their communities. It is also a method which encompasses possibilities to view the lack of diversity from multiple perspectives. Woodcraft (2014) describes the use of ethnography in approaching goals of social sustainability as a way to understand people's experiences, "...their use of streets and public spaces, their choice of routes through a neighbourhood, their awareness of local history and culture [and how this] shapes and influences their understanding of place" (2014:135).

In this study, Berlin as a city is an important part of the research. Through observation I have studied the co-housing projects in their environments. This has given me more understanding of how the co-housing projects can be perceived and how they are different from how they have been described in literature (Holm 2010, Droste 2015).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented why social sustainability is important to use in this study of co-housing even though some clarity of its use is lacking (Woodcraft 2014:34; Weingaertner & Moberg (2014:2). I have also described how the city can be a place where

social sustainability is not that easily accomplished. Previous research about co-housing describes the projects from different angles and questions their contributions as sustainable housing alternatives. My aim with the presentation of co-housing in literature has been to show that it is an area which is gaining attention in debates, and that still needs research. This is especially true for the more recent model of co-housing which is becoming popular in inner-city areas, like *Baugruppen* co-housing projects. In the coming chapter, I turn to my fieldwork and how the methods I have chosen have been beneficial to this study and topic.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The city as a site of everyday practice provides valuable insights into the linkages of macroprocesses with the texture and fabric of human experience. The city is not the only place where these linkages can be studied, but the intensification of these processes—as well as their human outcomes—occurs and can be understood best in cities. - Setha Low (1996:384)

A culture of resistance and activism has long existed in Berlin, which makes the presence of co-housing projects an important aspect to account for in methodology. In this case, when debating who has “the right to the city” (Harvey 2012), it appears as if *Baugruppen* co-housing poses a threat to that right even though it seems as if the intent with co-housing is to enhance communal living in the city. In this chapter I will account for the research methods I have used to understand co-housing, and reflect on the challenges which I have encountered at the field.

Methodology and delimitation of the field

In order to get closer to the social world of co-housing, I have used interviews, conversations and observation. In its entirety, the fieldwork has been conducted over the course of three trips between February and May 2016 and comprised a stay of six weeks in total. I have had guided tours and interviewed residents of three buildings: ASt21, OUR SPACE and Pappel44. In Pappel44 I stayed in a guest apartment for ten days. In addition to these co-housing projects, I studied the buildings of Wohnen am Hochdamm, R50 and Spreefeld from the outside, without meeting their residents and therefore focused more on their architecture and surrounding environment. The buildings are marked on the cut-out map below in Image 1.

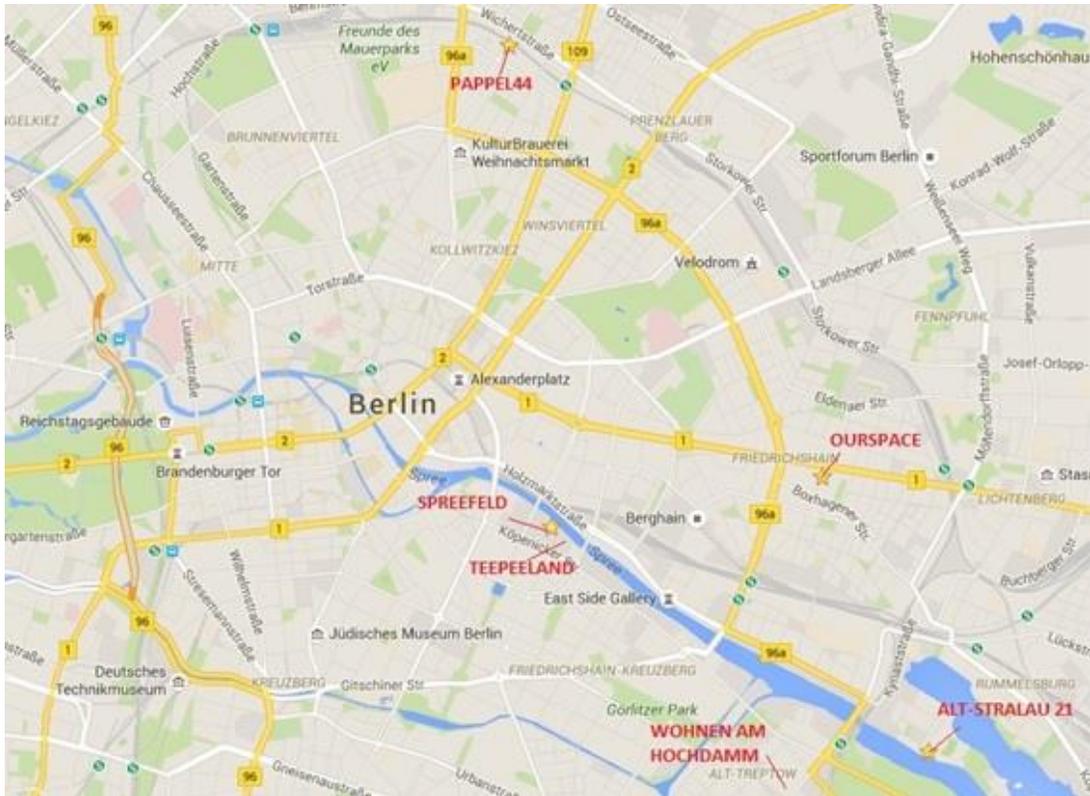


Image 1: Map of visited co-housing locations (Source: Google maps, 2016)

In addition to studying several co-housing buildings, the fieldwork has included observing urban environments, neighbourhoods and having conversations with residents at a squatting community, TeePeeland. TeePeeland is located next to the co-housing community complex called Spreefeld (see map). To transport myself between the locations of the co-housing buildings I have walked, used trams and the metro (U-bahn and S-bahn). During observation at the co-housing sites, I have asked members about how their projects were initiated, what motivated them to start a collaborative housing project, and how they view other co-housing projects similar to theirs. The stay at Pappel44 has provided me with some insight, albeit limited, into the everyday lives of co-housing residents. Despite staying for a limited amount of time, those ten days compose a necessary part of the fieldwork which complements the interview data.

As the study has involved travelling to several sites and exploring the city and its neighbourhoods in relation to co-housing, it could be described as a multi-sited ethnographic study (Falzon 2009). Multi-sited techniques seek to “follow people,

connections, associations and relationships across space because they are substantially continuous but spatially non-contiguous” (Falzon2009:1-2). For instance, by going to TeePeeland to understand the point of view of their residents and inquire squatters about the changes in the city, I have understood better how the presence of a co-housing project can affect their neighbours. This is not to say that differences in co-housing cooperatives’ organizations and philosophies are not important to acknowledge. The co-housing communities perceive their surroundings in different ways and their impact is not the same with every building. However, while they are different, *Baugruppen* co-housing projects are similar in building style and populations which I will argue makes them parallel and related phenomena (2009:2).

Participant observation and walking

Participant observation has been carried out on three occasions. The first two were in April during two organized, social gatherings in Pappel44’s *Gemeinschaftsraum* (community room) - a community lunch and a community dinner (Bread & Butter) which hosted around ten people on both occasions. The third was in early May at the squatting community TeePeeland which had about five community members present. At the Pappel44 events I was given insight into the communal aspects of co-housing by having what Gray (2004) calls “informal conversational interviews” (2004:217-218) with the attending residents where they told me about their motivations to join the community, and what makes them unique as a housing association and collaborative project in Berlin. At TeePeeland, I interacted with three squatters and asked them how they relate to their co-housing neighbours in Spreefeld (see map), which unfolded as “naturally occurring conversations” (Aull Davies 2008:105). Moreover, the “chief” of TeePeeland, Flieger, spoke to me during approximately one hour about the community’s future in relation to the area on which they squat, how they cooperate with Spreefeld, and of course, about the rise of *Baugruppen* in Berlin.

A valuable part of the research was gained during my time spent at Pappel44. In line with Woodcraft (2014) who argues that “...focusing on lived experience in a particular place” (2014:132) is a way to understand people’s behaviour in the city from a larger perspective, I settled and temporarily became a part of their home environment. Image 2 shows a

floorplan of Pappel44 where I stayed, on the top floor right above the entrance. From the stay at Pappel44, I was given the chance to understand the balance of private and communal life, and to examine what design for social sustainability gives the resident. To gain perspective of how co-housing can impact its surroundings and the people living in the vicinity, I observed the architecture of the building; the interior and the inner courtyard yard and the shared space. I also wanted to put myself in the co-housing resident's position which meant I participated in similar quotidian activities, such as shopping at the adjacent grocery store (Kaiser's) and had coffee in the surrounding cafés. In this context, my experience there had a mixture of participatory and non-participatory aspects of observation, where the buildings were studied from an “insider” and “outsider” perspective (Gray 2004:242).

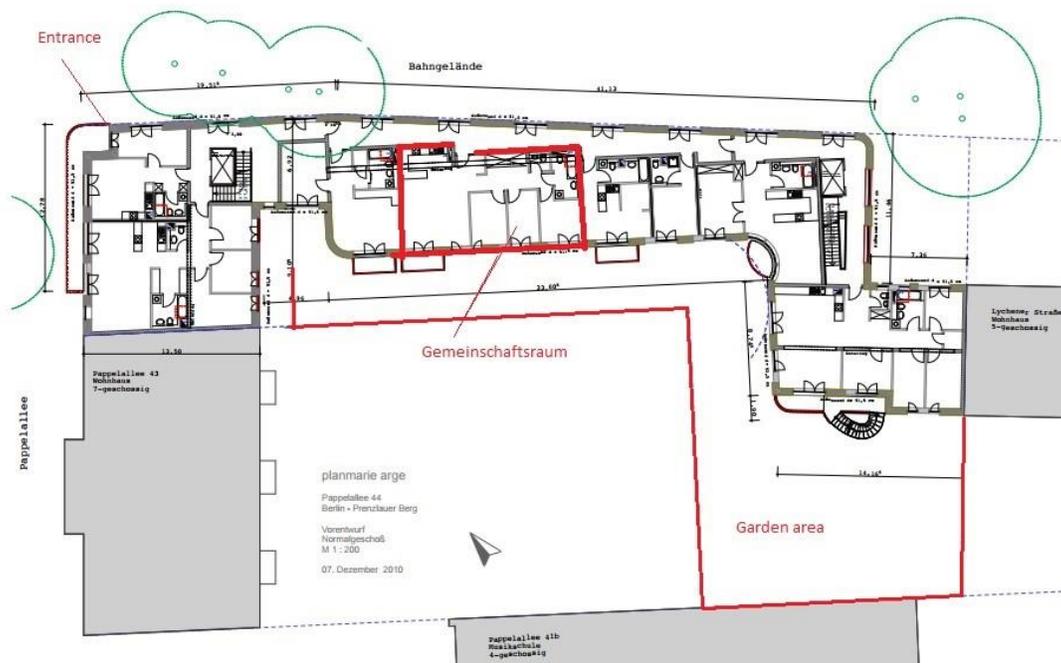


Image 2: Floorplan of Pappel44 (Source: Website of Pappel44)

Additionally, I have had guided tours through the shared rooms and gardens by a resident in each building that I visited. In the first building I visited - ASt21 - I was guided by

Walter, a retired psychiatrist in his sixties where I recorded our conversation. In what Tim Ingold (2008) calls a “profoundly social activity” (2008:1), walking with the informant becomes a way in which the researcher creates a narrative on foot (2008: 10). It brings out the embodied experience of the research which words cannot account for (2008: *ibid*). According to Sarah Pink (2008), sharing walks with the informant also enhances the understanding of the place and makes the researcher aware as an “embodied being” (2008:179) at the ethnographic field site and of the impact that we have on the place that we study (2008: *ibid*). In my experience, the tours were a time when more casual conversations with the informants became possible. During the walks, we were relaxed and immersed in the environment. The design of the building usually became a focal point of discussion where the resident shared with me what rooms were used for and recalled anecdotes of events in the rooms. It was also a time when discussions of disagreements on the use of shared space came to the surface. Consequently, these tours increased my understanding of the link of social life to the architecture and design of the buildings.

In line with Woodcraft (2014), who defines social sustainability as a combination of “design of the physical realm with design of the social world” (2014:133), the construction of *Baugruppen* co-housing in this study is reflected upon in two main ways; as physical projects where architecture and design compose components of social sustainability for city residents where ideals and views are fostered (2012:32), and as objectives and processes believed to be achieved through the communities and their organizations. The intention of studying both their architecture and social organization has been to illustrate how these combined elements complement one another (2014:133). Therefore, the projects have been viewed upon in terms of how their design physically and socially blends with the surroundings (Fromm 2012) and how they stand out in contrast. In order to experience the projects from a city resident’s point of view, I have followed a process of walking down the streets near the co-housing buildings and also in their neighbourhoods (Shortell & Aderer 2014:110). This approach resonates with what Woodcraft (2014) describes as exploring “...the social life of cities, the small-scale and mundane aspects of urban life” (2014:134).

Semi-structured interviews

In summary, I have recorded eight semi-structured interviews in English with co-housing residents in their homes, one of which was a group interview (Aull Davies 2008:106) with a resident and the architect of the building. In research, this is described as situated in-depth interviews (Miller & Glassner 2011). It is a format meant to construct narratives which provides insight into another world to “reveal evidence of the phenomena under investigation” (Miller & Glassner 2011:131). The researcher is in the informant’s home environment where they can express themselves freely. Furthermore, by interviewing all residents but one individually there has been time to peel off layers, and to get to the bottom of “risky” topics. Examples of such topics are responsibility, privilege and gentrification. These topics might otherwise have been discussed less openly and been affected by the presence of another resident (Aull Davies 2008: 115-116).

In line with Gray (2004), who states that semi-structured interviews are good for “...probing of views and opinions where it is desirable for respondents to expand on their answers” (2004:217), the conversations have been steered in the desired direction when needed, whilst also staying open to diversions when I have noticed potential for adding new dimensions to the data. The interviews have ranged in length between 45 minutes and one and a half hour, although in cases when the topic discussed should be explored further (Gray 2004:219), the interviews have been extended to two or three hours. Semi-structured interviews have been optimal to understand the perspective of the informants. With this technique, the co-housing residents and I have discussed what drew them to the projects in the first place, how they regard their organizational form and its value system, and subsequently how they regard their role in the city.

In addition to interviews with co-housing residents, I have recorded three semi-structured interviews with researchers who are knowledgeable in the field of urban planning, and about co-housing specifically. The interviews were less structured than interviews with residents, which made the interaction unfold in an organic manner (Holstein & Gubrium 1995:38). We mainly discussed topics of gentrification and activism in the city. Their input has provided me with local awareness about co-housing, and filled the void of what has not been accessible to me in literature.

Additionally, to further understand how *Baugruppen* co-housing is perceived to impact neighbourhoods from a critical viewpoint, I have also relied on “naturally occurring conversations” (Aull Davies 2008:105) with activists after a screening of documentary film ‘Verdrängung hat viele Gesichter’⁵ (Schwarzer Hahn 2014) at Haus im Widerstand. The film focuses on *Baugruppen* in Berlin, and in the discussion afterwards it was explained to me why there is an opposition to *Baugruppen* in certain social circles in Berlin. Mostly, *Baugruppen* residents were discussed in pejorative terms. The criticism regarded their lifestyle which was described as a form of appropriation of a leftist culture and ideals.

Reflexivity and ethics

At the Pappel44 events, I was presented by an informant to the attending residents as “Helena from Sweden, doing research about co-housing”. Since this introduction prevented me from being anonymous⁶, I reflected on how the informants were affected by my presence (Gray 2004:252-253), and how it might alter their behaviour. At times, being completely visible as a researcher while participating in events which are part of the residents’ quotidian lives was challenging, and at times it seemed like a hindrance in understanding the nuances of their organisation. With that said, research which draws from closely connected experiences to the informants was an inevitable part of this process to understand the reality of the co-housing residents’ everyday lives (Gray 2004:21).

Although I am fascinated with the concept of co-housing projects and drawn to exploring them, I have also been hesitant to join one myself. At the outset of this venture I had the idea that modern co-housing communities must be based on ideals; ideals of what a good citizen is, how one is supposed to live and that the way one chooses to live is subcultural but altered to fit mainstream society. By moving into one of the buildings and thus “going native”, I expected to get closer to this truth. Once there, my biggest concern was that I would already be familiar with the cultural context. This predicament can be described as a remnant of a post-colonial discipline and identifying with the “cosmopolitan subject”

⁵ Film title in English: ‘Displacement has many faces’

⁶ A mass e-mail was sent out by one informant to every resident that I was a student researching co-housing.

(Pnina Werbner 2008:48). Occasionally, I was concerned that the tendency to mirror myself in the informants could impair the validity of the study, and that I would be partial to their opinions because we shared a social status (Aull Davies 2008:111). In the end, conducting fieldwork in a metropolitan city like Berlin is a kind of “home anthropology”, where the field explored is located near the institutions which have informed my academic thought. This put extra pressure on self-reflexivity.

When discussing gentrification with the co-housing residents, I was extra aware of my role to maintain ethics in the study (2004:43, 2008:53). When I presented my field of study to the residents (2008:54, 57) it was difficult at times because I did not want the residents to believe that the study would have a negative tone, which would make them reserved during discussions of these topics. In interviews, when I sensed that there was a small risk that certain questions could be perceived by residents as accusations, I initially refrained from posing the question or procrastinated to see how the conversation unfolded. However, with time this improved and the conversations became easier to initiate. Although my interest in the study has early been driven by questioning power relations, it ironically became the most difficult topic to discuss.

Throughout the thesis, the co-housing residents are described using fictive names to ensure anonymity (Aull Davies 2008:59, Gray 2004:222) as part of the code of ethics for anthropologists (Bernard 2006:26). This is with the exception of the three researchers interviewed which have been named; Niko, Thomas and Tore. Each interview has included an oral form of consent (Aull Davies 2008:55) where the willingness to participate was confirmed by the co-housing residents (ibid: 55-56), and where I explained that the recorded interviews are confidential material which would only be available to me (ibid: 59). Finally it is important to emphasize that not every co-housing resident that I have met or interviewed was part of the original cooperative that started the *Baugruppe*. Some residents moved in when the design and organization was established. As a consequence, this means that they might have a slightly different view on the co-housing projects and their participatory aspects.

Research process

For the most part, the fieldwork has been an inductive process (Gray 2004:6, Bernard 2002:512) where theory and empirical material has been built throughout the study, with new insights gained from interview material and observation sessions. At the field, I have relied on Gray's (2004) idea of thoroughly using mental notes and then transforming them into jotted down notes (2004:244). Regularly, I have scribbled down notes and analytic memos (Saldaña 2013:41) to compliment the codes in the transcribed interviews directly after the observation and before writing down more thorough field notes. In addition to notes of what I saw, I have taken photographs (Aull Davies 2008:131) of the buildings and neighbourhoods.

The first selection of informants was made through a form of convenience sampling (Bernard 2006:191-192), based on residents who responded to an e-mail I sent through a website for co-housing in Berlin⁷ where co-housing projects could be browsed through a search engine. After I had contact with a couple of co-housing residents through the website, I was further connected to more residents either of the same project or a different building who were interested in taking part in the study. As a way to build onto the random sampling, I relied on participants who forwarded my e-mail to others in the building which turned the process into "snowball sampling" (Gray 2004:218, 325; Bernard 2006:192-193). To further increase my chances of finding informants, I posted inquiries on Facebook communities with a focus on collaborative living, where a small number of residents showed interest in participating.

In order to reach saturation in interviews, Gray (2004:219) suggests expanding the sample size "...until no new viewpoints are emerging from the data" (2004:219). Reaching complete saturation in data was not possible due to a time limitation at the field. However, while coding interviews (Saldaña 2013) I divided themes into categories and focused on the elements of the answers which I found particularly important. I looked for recurrences in themes (Bernard 2006:501) to understand what the co-housing residents had expressed that bore resemblance between buildings and between individual residents. Saturation was

⁷ <http://www.cohousing-berlin.de>

reached when repetition in answers occurred regarding organisational structure, values which motivates residents in choosing the co-housing community, in what ways their homes are sustainable and reactions to criticism of gentrifying the area. Appropriately, it took me until the eighth interview to acknowledge repetition in several areas of my questions. However, there were more differences than similarities on the last point which made it a difficult theme to stop talking about! With this in mind, I did not reach a point of “no new viewpoints” as Gray suggests (2004:219), but enough repetition between residents of different buildings to estimate that a tipping point in saturated data had been reached.

In ethnography, saturation is difficult to assess in casual conversations and informal interviews since different questions may be asked to different people (Gray 2004:218), and the structured format similar to the recorded interviews is lacking. For this reason, I have actively listened to what the informant is saying in these instances, whilst connecting it to the research objective (ibid: 219). For the most part, saturation in observation was not completely reached as it was difficult to assess. The exception was architectural similarities between co-housing buildings. For instance, open-ended areas hinting at ‘social architecture’ (Jones & Card 2011) was visible in some buildings, and in others the entrances were more ‘gated’. Consequently, by relying on visual memory and collected photographic material (Aull Davies 2008:131) I could assess sufficient observational data for the study.

Conclusion

The choice of methods for this study has comprised several approaches to illustrate a complex set of issues. The main point of my fieldwork in Berlin has been to gain insight into the communities which this study is about. Another point of my fieldwork was to hear directly from the residents what their intentions for choosing their co-housing communities are, and also how they select new members. In order to have a better understanding of how these co-housing communities can be discussed in light of gentrification, I focused on these issues with the residents. Additionally, by visiting and talking to squatters located next to a co-housing community I have been given the

opportunity to understand the “other” side of the debate, and understand more about the nuances that are evident in the discussion about co-housing.

In the next chapter, I will introduce the co-housing buildings I have been to, and describe their shared space, functions and residents.

Chapter 4: Co-housing in practice

Before coming to Berlin, I had my share of preconceptions about co-housing which I had to confront upon arriving at the field site. Most of all, I wanted to see if the residents' ideals were in line with the sustainable thinking about the city and goals of inclusion and sustainability, that the city authorities have proclaimed (Stattbau 2012/2015:7). Since co-housing residents can choose to exclude themselves from the adjacent neighbourhoods, I was interested to know how open they are to the outside when they also have to defend their self-managed projects. What I found was that they are not that different from residents in other forms of housing. Most of the time I could identify with their way of thinking and their views on the housing situation. However, the co-housing residents have an admittance process which is independently conducted, and this gives them conditions to either create social diversity or homogeneity. This is the part of co-housing communities' constitution which I was particularly interested in learning more about.

The buildings I have studied are in good standard and the residents' level of education, level of income, friends, family relations and other social networks show that they also are rich in social capital (Suckow 2009). These traits give them opportunities to choose a home to their liking and housing of good standard. In this chapter I will illustrate a couple of issues. The first one is how important the socioeconomic status of the residents is in the initiation and creation of *Baugruppen* co-housing. The second one is how the co-housing residents look for new members through a networking process, and if their socioeconomic status contributes to cohesion and communality in the co-housing projects. However, I will start by explaining the different forms of tenure in co-housing which will be followed by an introduction of the co-housing buildings I have visited.

Different forms of tenure, still co-housing

The types of co-housing projects which I have encountered differ somewhat in their financial and legal structure (Stattbau 2012/2015:105-108). OUR SPACE is a *Baugemeinschaft* (building community), defined by co-ownership of land, ownership of the building and private ownership of the individual flats in the building. Pappel44, on the other hand, is rented as a *Genossenschaft* (rental cooperative) but the land is owned by the

residents. ASt21 is a *Verein* (cooperative/housing association) and residents rent the building from an external owner. In all three cases, the co-housing projects have been completed in collaboration with an architect. The group of residents was formed either before finding an architect, such as with OUR SPACE, or found by an architect who wanted to realise a co-housing project, as with Pappel44. One could go by the principle that the more '*genossenschaftlich*' ("association-like") a co-housing community is, the more active participation there is from residents and "communal overhead". Similarly, the more owner-based and private, the more individual and free it is in its organization. With that said, in my experience of the projects, the reality is more complex and form of tenure does not have to govern what kind of philosophy a co-housing community has.

In interviews, residents from Pappel44 have distanced their community from a *Baugruppe*, and described a *Baugruppe* as a more commercialized version of co-housing than co-housing by a *Genossenschaft*. Some residents I have spoken to claim that *Baugruppen* co-housing is "not really co-housing" and that it is just being marketed as such, and that they are not a *Baugruppe* because they are a *Genossenschaft* and did not hire a developer for their project. By these comments, co-housing and *Baugruppen* would be mutually exclusive concepts. However, with the support of Vestbro's definition of co-housing (Krokfors 2012: Vestbro in Krokfors 2012:309, Vestbro & Horelli 2011:1), the different legal forms *Baugemeinschaft*, *Genossenschaft* and *Verein* can still be defined as co-housing by *Baugruppen*. Consequently, if nothing else is explained, my focus in this text is inner-city co-housing projects created by *Baugruppen*, within the metro system's *Ringbahn* as a geographical delimitation (Falzon 2009). The *Ringbahn* is displayed in Image 3 below.

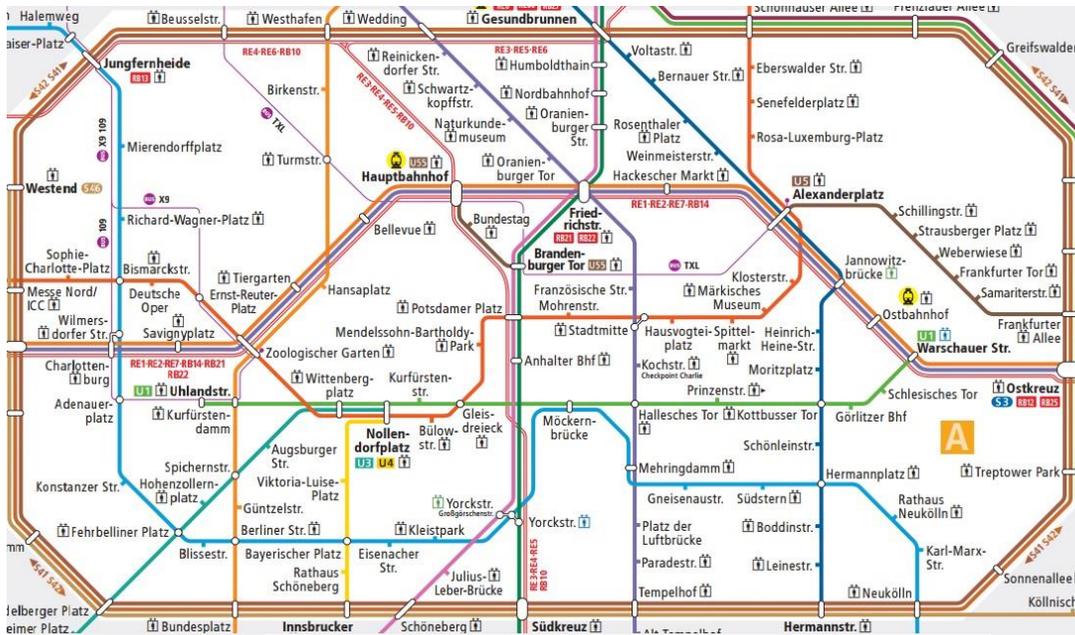


Image 3: Berlin metro system (Source: Website S-bahn Berlin) (the outer train track is the ‘S-ring’)

The co-housing buildings

Each of the buildings I have visited are situated in different areas of former East Berlin. In general, there is a concentration of *Baugruppen* co-housing projects in former Eastern areas (Berlin Hyp 2016; Suckow 2009:26). The districts where they are located have been through large demographic changes since the unification which has included new housing and an upgrading of that area (Heinsohn in Twark & Hildebrandt 2015:131). Some of the areas in the former East, like Prenzlauer Berg, are already developed (2015:131) and there is no evident contrast between the co-housing building there and its environment. However, a common factor is that where the co-housing buildings are situated, space utilisation and costs to construct a building of good standard have been possible to reach efficiently. The co-housing communities I have visited are all built with a group of residents that have similar financial possibilities.

Pappel44 is located in Prenzlauer Berg. The neighbourhood of Prenzlauer Berg has come the furthest of all the former Eastern areas in terms of regeneration (Heinsohn in Twark & Hildebrandt 2015:131). As a consequence, the modern architecture of Pappel44 blends in well in the area and in relation to the adjacent buildings. However, there are still traces

of the past nearby with Mauerpark which has been built on the Death Strip, a former occupation zone. In fact, signs of unfinished parks, recreation areas and building projects as well as eclecticism in architecture is typical of Berlin, and there is never a certainty about what lurks around the corner. The construction of the Pappel44 was finished in 2012 and it is now lived in by 29 children, 39 adults and 6 retired residents. This is a large number of children (in comparison to the other buildings). They have a total of 2 800 m² living area and a community space of 78m². The whole building consists of 29 apartments. Their inner-courtyard is encased with walls by other residential buildings, which includes their neighbouring co-housing building Leuchtturm. From a pedestrian's point of view, Pappel44 is nearly inconspicuous and upon arrival I was not sure which building it was.

On the website of Pappel44, the site description declares that the co-operative has “deliberately opted for an urban location of [their] housing project” (Innerstädtisch Wohnen eG Pappel44 2016) and that this is due to the presence of infrastructure, schools and medical institutions that are present in the city (ibid). This was confirmed to me during my stay there. It was easy to reach several areas of the city from their home, and nothing was located too far away. They are thereby rich in amenities which is presented as one of the important aspects of social sustainability (Woodcraft 2012:35, Woodcraft & Dixon 2013:474-75).



Image 4: Pappel44 (Source: Website of Pappel44)

OUR SPACE is located in Friedrichshain and built on the inside of a court-yard. In similarity to Pappel44, the residents share a court-yard with other residential buildings, but the entry to the building and its surroundings is open from an adjacent street. Matteo, a researcher in his late thirties, describes their open architecture as a conscious choice: “You have two possibilities, you can make a defensive border and say “We are the residents here from the new building and you are from the old one” but we decided to let this contact open and to build no barriers“. However, in view of his declaration of open architecture, in order to enter the building from its official address I had to pass through two main doors. The first one is covered in graffiti tags which appears like a camouflage. The second entrance door which I had to pass is used by the residents to access their apartments. Since the first door did not visually match the picture of OUR SPACE shown in Image 5, this initially made me think that I had reached the wrong address. As such, it was confusing for a visitor that the building is slightly hidden. However, I have learned that it has been common to build housing on narrow land in Berlin to utilize space to its fullest and to reduce building costs.

The particular area of Friedrichshain where OUR SPACE is located has turned into a high-profile nightlife spot in recent years, with bars and restaurants that attract tourists as well as locals. The building has 12 apartments, a total living area of 1280 square meters and 40 square meters of community space. The community consists of 10 children, 17 adults under 60 and no retired residents. A large number of the residents in OUR SPACE work in creative industries. I have met an artist, researcher and architect from this building. They have lived in the co-housing building since 2013.



Image 5: OUR SPACE (Source: Christoph Wagner Architekten)

ASt21 is the co-housing buildings which diverges most from city life and in proximity to amenities and communications. In similarity to OUR SPACE, it is a part of Friedrichshain but built on a peninsula by the Spree and therefore slightly peripheral. The community's site description presents the building as situated in a "reliable" (Hausgemeinschaft Alt-Stralau 21 2016) part of the city. The building itself is accessible from several directions

and is enclosed with a small fence, but walking to the waterfront where their building is situated is completely open and accessible to pedestrians.

The co-housing project consists of 22 apartments with a total living area of 2200 square meters, whereof 45 square meters are community space. The community currently has 11 children living there, with 21 adults under 60 and 9 adults over 60. Of the three co-housing buildings described here, ASt21 is located in the area with the largest number of expensive buildings (Schmidl 2015). The neighbourhood is a housing estate area with several residential buildings which are in similar building style to ASt21, white and with functional architecture. Even though the area is well-planned as a community of similar buildings, it lacks the amenities that comprise a small-scale neighbourhood (Woodcraft 2012:35, Woodcraft & Dixon 2013:474-75). However, this will most likely change as the area grows, which is suggested in the several surrounding buildings which are under construction.



Image 6: ASt21 (Source: CoHousing Berlin)

My experience of visiting these three co-housing projects is that despite their different forms of tenure, they are very similar in their form of housing and their utilisation of previously Eastern areas to build their co-housing projects. They have different forms of tenure, but OUR SPACE and Pappel44 are similar as owners of land.

In the following section I will give insight into how life inside the co-housing buildings can be. I will describe how the residents view their communities and also how they view themselves.

LIFE IN THE CO-HOUSING BUILDINGS

Collective functions and shared space

An important aspect to consider with the arrival of *Baugruppen* co-housing projects is that they coincide with a population growth in Berlin (Berlin Hyp 2016:1). This is combined with a high interest in investing in real-estate and with city-led efforts to regenerate and renew areas of the city (Holm 2010). When speaking to Tore Dobberstein, an economist working at an office for urban development in Spreefeld he says: “Berlin was a blind spot on the housing market before the economic crisis”. Around 2009/2010 after the economic crisis in Europe, he tells me that many *Baugruppen* started forming and that by then it was still cheap to build a co-housing project. In his own community, which was initiated in 2008, the members struggled to find enough people to realize the project. However, this quickly changed. Around this time, the city authorities began supporting the idea of co-housing projects and created incentives to increase the amount of building communities. This time period and housing climate laid the foundation for the trend today. Laura, an IT worker in her early forties says:

Everybody and their daughters started a *Baugruppe*, so I think around this time [2009/2010] there must have been a flush of building land [...] and then there was a percentage of land reserved for *Baugruppen*, so it was easy to get a bit, and so “sure, let’s do it.”

As soon as there was a heightened interest in the idea of self-initiated co-housing, Tore's co-housing project had several parties looking for a place in the community.

Lucy Sargisson (2012) suggests that co-housing is growing in cities because residents "...believe that there is something wrong with life in most villages, towns and cities and they want to develop a better alternative" (Sargisson 2012:29). By this definition, urban co-housing is constructed by residents who do not need to live together but choose to do so in search of a more community-based lifestyle than what is currently being offered (2012:29). Similarly, Thomas Honeck (2016) at Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space (IRS), says that a heightened interest in co-housing communities today is because people are isolated in cities but that they are also relying on others to create their own communities:

Generally people don't have a family anymore as their social environment, [...] so nowadays people have to look for social relations themselves. There is the idea that you don't have only friends but you also have so to say social relations similar to the family ones, different but that you create yourself.

In this model of co-housing, residents are able to balance individual needs with a need for sharing, and in view of the *Baugruppen* co-housing projects that I have studied, it is an accurate description of their organizations. What I have found when speaking to members of *Baugruppen* is that the creation of their co-housing buildings, if implemented successfully and to a realistic standard, is primarily a social process where residents' involvement is intended to continue after the project is finished. Florian, a translator in his early forties, says:

This group will go through all the process of building and then take all the decisions together concerning a common life and then at the same time you have your own flat where you can live your own life and nobody would be curious about it.

The way that Florian describes their building shows that the concept of co-housing is a process and a product with incentives to fulfil individual and collective needs at the same

time (McCamant & Durrett 2011:253; Suckow 2009:11). It anchors members in what is often remembered as a long, challenging, participatory building process (2009:9, 2011:26). Residents participate in choosing the design of their apartments with the architect (McCamant & Durrett 2011:235) as well as the shared areas. They are normally planned in detail by the group and the architect (2011: *ibid*). The communities share building costs and make decisions in meetings that are based on a majority vote.

An aspect which makes co-housing communities different from regular residential buildings is that they have shared rooms made for collective activities (Fromm 2012:364, McCamant & Durrett 2011:28). These rooms are primarily made for members, but it happens that co-housing communities arrange events which give others access to these shared areas. The rooms can be flexible in use or designed for specific activities (*ibid*: 265) such as woodwork, music and art practices. In the communities I have visited, the *Gemeinschaftsraum* (community room) is used for group meetings and social events such as dinners, lunch events and parties. Normally, there is also a variety of apartment sizes for different family structures (*ibid*: 31-32). An advantage of this is that the residents can move to another apartment within the building if they need to and it is available: “If things change in life, a bigger flat or a smaller flat, you can just swop with [co-housing] neighbours”, says Florian. In addition to private apartments, the buildings’ shared rooms differ in numbers and square meters. This is something which depends on how much the community emphasises collective space as important (*ibid*: 31). A *Gemeinschaftsraum*, a roof terrace and a garden or courtyard is shared and used by all co-housing buildings I have visited. For being relatively small (McCamant & Durrett 2011:275), the co-housing buildings are simple with a design that creates a habitable atmosphere.

In addition to shared rooms, co-housing residents share social “services” on a semi-personal level to sustain their communities. The three buildings I have visited all strive towards having a profile of inter-generational living (McCamant & Durrett 2011:9-10; Geisel 2012/15:7). Residents of the “middle” generation have mentioned that they appreciate the variety of ages living together, and that their children can play with each other. It has been repeatedly acknowledged that the possibility to trust one’s neighbours to the point where they can leave their child with them is one of the most important

aspects of their community. Matteo says: “If you ask Julia [another resident in Matteo’s building], the door can be open at night too. She doesn’t lock the door”. He further explains:

When she goes to work, she has no grandmother to bring the child and so on. This is a very big resource, to have somebody in the house you can trust, you can knock on the door and say “sorry, I have to leave, can you care for Anna for the next few hours?”

Similarly, when one resident broke his arm in the middle of moving to another flat in Pappel44, several members of the group helped him. This was pointed out to me as something which would not have been as likely to occur in a regular residential building. Events like these show that the residents have a high level of trust in each other and cooperation as it works in the communities in everyday life. At the same time, there is a limit to socialising and the sense of community does not entail a close bond for everyone. Chiodelli & Baglione (2014) claim that in co-housing “all the residents take part in regular collective meetings, in which they address questions related to community management” (2014:23). What I have found is more reminiscent of Ferdinand Tönnies’ description of community in *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (1887), a combination of community and distance. In some cases, *Baugruppen* co-housing communities are more characterised by *Gesellschaft* as they are not necessarily involved in mandatory activities. Florian tells me that their organization would “never work” if people felt like they had to attend obligatory meetings on a weekly basis and that they have “people who don’t appear at all”⁸.

‘A chosen community’

In cities, certain social groups like lower-income residents, religious minorities and ethnic minorities sometimes live in less attractive or even in poverty-stricken areas. Because such groups are perceived as socially weaker in status, they are judged by others as difficult to integrate into society (Dragoi 2016: 410). *Baugruppen* co-housing communities, on the other hand, are intentionally creating homes for people with financial as well as social

⁸ Instead they have representatives standing in as a *veto* if a resident is not able to, or chooses not to attend the meeting.

resources. Some research suggests that they are creating “self-segregating” lifestyles (Ruiu 2014:317). Therefore, it is important to explore the social class and social values in the co-housing communities as it is what gives residents the opportunity to initiate and sustain the projects. It is also important in order to understand why co-housing communities are discussed in research contexts as exclusionary (Chiodelli & Baglione 2014, Holm 2010, Droste 2015).

Richard Florida (2002) describes ‘the creative class’ as a new economic class of city dwellers and cultural consumers who are drawn to places where innovate, technological and economic activities can thrive (Florida 2002:218). In comparison to an “ordinary workforce” (Van Heerden & Bontje 2013:465) ‘the creative class’ are looking for places that have diversity and people with an open attitude, where their identities as creative people can be confirmed (Florida 2002:218). With that said, despite being identified through their creative endeavours, ‘the creative class’ are primarily defined as people of an economic class who “add economic value through their creativity” (2002:68). While many members of ‘the creative class’ do not view themselves as belonging to a specific social group, Florida (2002) argues that they share several common traits (2002: *ibid*).

The residents from ASt21, OUR SPACE and Pappel44 share some traits of ‘the creative class’ (Florida 2002), although not all of them would recognize themselves as a tech-savvy, creative group of people. As there are several cultural workers in the co-housing buildings, and specifically in OUR SPACE, they are the most ‘creative class’-like community, whereas ASt21 and Pappel44 can be more characterized as middle-class with jobs ranging from psychiatrist (Walter) to IT-worker (Laura). What is common for residents in all the co-housing communities is that they predominantly are people with a higher education and that they can afford the shared cost of building a co-housing project. Previous research on *Baugruppen* in Berlin show that members have similar characteristics; they are residents with university degrees (Suckow 2009:22-23), a higher than average income (2009: 19-20), primarily German nuclear families (2009:3) and that they often have jobs in the cultural sector (*ibid*: 25). Max, an elementary school teacher in his early forties, confirms his building as “one kind of people, they’re all *Bildungsbürger* [educated class], like they’re bourgeois a bit, they all have money and they all have good education”.

Most of co-housing residents that I have met are, as Florian explains, originally from “richer parts of the country”. They have migrated to Berlin for jobs, education or an attraction to the local culture and its opportunities. Matteo moved from Italy to Berlin fifteen years ago and is one of the few non-German *Baugruppe* initiators, an entry he made through a network of friends and colleagues. He believes that people from other parts of the country start *Baugruppen* in bigger cities because they are “looking for a kind of chosen community” and a better quality of life. This shows that there is intentionality behind *Baugruppen* co-housing:

I mean, in Berlin there was in the last twenty years like a stagnation in new buildings, and rent was over-crowded [here the informant is referring to rents as too high] and people who have a little more financial possibilities, they don’t want to accept rental conditions that they don’t really want, and they began to think “Ok, maybe we can organize ourselves and build a house after our expectations and ideas, and maybe it will be cheaper than to pay rent for the next thirty years”.

In regards to the financial possibilities which Matteo talks about that are needed to initiate the co-housing projects, I have learnt that in their own words the residents refer to themselves as a socioeconomically privileged group too, but with leftist sympathies. Johannes, an artist in his late thirties says that his community is “leftist, but really bourgeois”, while Nadja, a researcher in her sixties, rejects the idea that they are rich and states: “I think that’s middle class, you can get middle-class but it’s not rich”.

In similarity to research of modern co-housing projects (McCamant & Durrett 2011:9, Sargisson 2012:36) I have not come across a *Baugruppe* which is explicitly organized around ideology or an outspoken vision for the group. When speaking to Laura about what defines their community model, she says that they are mostly on the left side of the political spectrum but that they are not a pronounced leftist co-housing group, like intentional communities⁹. In her view, intentional communities entail having “additional

⁹ Intentional communities are more common on the countryside and are known for arranging their organisations against mainstream values, often including eco-living, reducing costs and a focus on the collective. It does not stray too much from what inner-city co-housing communities adhere to value-wise, but like Laura says, there is no such holistic, ideologically driven focus for

intentions with the communal living”, “activist ideas shared” and weekly “mandatory meetings on political topics”.

Udo, a researcher in his early thirties and thereby the youngest co-housing resident that I have met, describes their cooperative and others similar to theirs as a kind of “social democratic sugar-coating of private ownership”:

Because there is no ideological position, like in many sort of leftist co-housing projects, there is a certain latent ideological stand-point of non-ideology, as if we don’t have any world-views or sort of socio-economic positioning. If you look at the income level, and the sort of upbringing in this house you will quickly see that there’s a certain socio-economic bubble that we all belong to more or less, and of course we don’t make it our philosophy that we can afford to live here, I mean, I think many people might actually mention that, acknowledge it “oh by the way, we’re all pretty liberal and progressive and whatever”, but in the end, this house needed to be built and someone had to pay for it.

Florida (2002) describes this type of non-stance in political positioning which Udo is talking about as a “bohemian-bourgeois synthesis” (2002:200). When describing how members of ‘the creative class’ find each other Florida (2002) explains how capital is gained through creativity, which does not need to entail owning property (2002:68). Instead, the fundamental property lies in creating meaning out of work and life (2002: ibid). With that said, the way that ‘the creative class’ residents find each other is still primarily reliant on their economic function (ibid), and money is a necessity in their creative endeavours (ibid: 68-69). From what Udo and other residents have implied, there is a consciousness about the privilege of their communities and their members, but there is also an importance to keep a low profile. According to Florida (2002) amongst creative class people, the issue of class must be downplayed in favour of skills and competences which are more important as status markers (2002:78).

Baugruppe co-housing projects. For more on co-housing and intentional communities, see Sargisson (2012).

The way that most residents have spoken about their communities in terms of social class implies that they are aware and reflective of their position in society. However, even though Nadja does not use the word rich to describe their community and prefers middle-class, they are defined by ‘culture class’ attributes, such as having an above average income, being well-educated and taking an interest in culture (Florida 2002:8). These characteristics, I have found, are important as criteria to get into a co-housing project as they give access to the “right” social network. In the buildings I have visited, it is common that residents select members from their own social network. For instance, in OUR SPACE, the architect lives in the building with the residents who are his friends. Chances of admittance to a co-housing project are also enhanced if prospective residents are already anchored in the social life of co-housing somehow. In Pappel44, a third of the members were found through contacts in their neighbouring co-housing community Leuchtturm, a process which Nadja describes as “kind of a snowball, it was advertisement, they were asking friends”.

Although German co-housing is described as “...initiated and lived in by middle- and lower middle class ‘self-providers’” (Droste 2015:80), the *Baugruppen* co-housing models are more than just middle-class homes. As will be described by residents in the coming part, their projects are housing alternative to high-income residents, but further criteria are important too, if not necessary. In my interviews with the residents I have found that social and cultural capital is important as criteria for entrance into a community too.

Sometimes the residents’ wish for diversity and variety contradicts the process of completing and sustaining the projects. I will describe this more in-depth below.

Creating the co-housing profile

The model of co-housing which developed in the 1960’s and 70’s sought to challenge norms in industrial society (Sargisson 2012:32, Egerö 2014:2). Those models were also capable of housing lower-income residents and those not able to find a home (Sargisson 2012:32). In view of the way that the co-housing residents which I have met are organising their homes, the *Baugruppen* co-housing model is becoming a housing concept more focused on individual needs for the social group which Florida describes as ‘the creative

class' (2002). This direction is possibly affected by the way that the city is developing. It is also possible that the housing market fosters a form of entrepreneurship in city residents. This does not necessarily mean that it is bad. However, it can lessen the social effect which co-housing has aimed to have. The motivation to start a *Baugruppe* co-housing project has large focus on self-realisation and implementing own ideas (Suckow 2009:11). This is also reflected in the admittance process which is governed by the residents.

The demands for entry to a co-housing project differ between buildings and there are communities which have social principles written into their bylaws governing entry (Chiodelli & Baglione 2014:23, McCamant & Durrett 2011). However, there are certain aspects which are more important than others, and there are some which are non-negotiable. Nadja tells me: "You need a relatively stable financial situation and life perspective, I mean, either professionally or family-wise and so, know where you are and what you want to do in the next ten years, for example". If residents are eligible according to those criteria, they are admitted through interviews which are described by Chiodelli & Baglione (2014) as a process conducted "...of almost an empathic nature" (2014:23). In interviews, some co-housing residents have described the final decision as being based on whether it "feels right" to the group, sometimes after conducting three interviews.

In general, liking a resident and their willingness to be communal is enough to maintain a profile which suits the community. With that said, at times, it is more important to ensure that the group has enough members who can pay for the project so that it can be finished. There are instances where co-housing projects have failed before realisation (Fiedler 2014:72) because they could not receive enough funding from other members, or members withdrew from the process (2014: *ibid*). One of the consequences is that admittance or "recruitment" of new members will not always be ruled by the inhabitants' social principles. Max tells me that:

It happens that people just want an apartment but are not really interested in this communal living get into the groups, and I think this is the most important part of these auditions [interviews for taking in new members]. For that it's important.

One of the 'creative class values' stated by Florida (2002) is an aversion to communality and a preference for individuality (2002:77), which also means that rigid rules are not adhered to. As the co-housing residents do not identify ideologically as left-wing or have clear communal principles, but still admit to having an overrepresentation of 'bourgeois' residents, I have been curious to know how a deviance from their current co-housing profiles are handled in the communities. What I have found is that despite incidences of unwanted residents in the communities, there have been no mentions of changing the principles or actions to increase collective thinking somehow. In my interview with Laura, she says: "We want people who participate, but if they then don't do it, there is no throwing people out." "There are three parties [apartments with people] who do not care so much about the social values [...]" "Three parties [who are not that involved] is totally okay". Thus, residents that do not integrate with the group might be discussed amongst members, but ultimately since they stay in the building anyway, it does not have much of an effect on the communities' everyday life.

In this case, low levels of collectivism, flexibility and practicality are managing principles connected to the financial base and social capital which governs the communities. In discussion with Laura, she tells me that she chose her community specifically because of the social principles but that there is no way to know for sure who they are living with: "I would expect that most people are leftist [in Pappel44, her community], but you never know [...] I just met a Trump supporter in the hallway!". Before moving to Pappel44, she considered joining a *Baugruppe* with private ownership but in the end decided to decline because of what she regarded as a profile of "build cheap property and build fences against your neighbours". At the screening of the community she tells me that there were speculators interested in a piece of real-estate, and recalls being shocked at some of the people there: "Blegh!" she exclaims. "There were these little real-estate moguls who could only afford one flat". The project she visited, she says, advertised as 'co-housing' by a *Baugruppe*, but was not characterised by shared functions:

One of the developers who was promoting his own project there, I asked, they had a very, very small garden, and then they promoted that basically two thirds of this

garden would be private. Would I move in here, are you stupid? And I asked them about common areas and that was the bicycle cellar, it was nothing.

Even though the buildings I have visited are all built on some kind of communal thinking, there are aspects of *Baugruppen* co-housing which show that they are individualistic projects tailor-made to suit a small group of residents in the city. The lack of clear communal principles which Laura describes can attract prospective stakeholders who want to invest in *Baugruppen* as real-estate for future profit. As the projects have a comparably low construction cost per square meter to other housing, it is an attractive alternative in the housing shortage situation.

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For those who can afford the costs, *Baugruppen* co-housing projects are options which bring a sense of community and stability. From what the co-housing residents have described, they are highly capable of sharing a community which satisfies needs related to social sustainability, such as proximity to amenities (Woodcraft 2012:35, Woodcraft & Dixon 2013:474-75). The possibility to rely on each other in everyday situations in the co-housing communities' organisations suggests that they are built on high levels of trust. Trust is connected to social capital (Woodcraft et al. 2011:33). These are attributes which are described as contributing to socially sustainable neighbourhoods (2011:33) and which are deemed important for creating social networks between different communities and categories of people (Woodcraft et al. 2011: 33). However, in view of the self-governed organisation principles and the liberty of admitting new members, it appears as if diversity is overlooked. As it is also not a demand of the projects to be diverse, their incentives to create possibilities for more open communities are limited. This presents a challenge for the co-housing projects to be considered sustainable, which I will discuss further in the next chapter.

In similarity to 'the creative class' who find each other on the basis of cultural and social capital (Florida 2002:68-69), the co-housing residents build their communities largely on a combination of financial stability and shared cultural and social understanding. Instead

of making ideology a driving force, practicality is an important cornerstone in their organizations and permeates their community projects “from the cleaning to the finances”, as described by Nadja. The possibility of communality in the buildings has been described by many residents as important. However, compared to more ideologically driven housing projects such as intentional communities (Sargisson 2012:31), their full participation is not needed in order to sustain the communities.

In Harvey’s view, the fight for achieving rights in the city today is mostly “individualistic and property-based” (2012:3) and thereby these attempts “do nothing to challenge” (ibid: 3) the hegemonic market structures or change housing into a basic, human right (ibid). In order to reach more just conditions in the city, he suggests collective efforts to work towards similar goals (ibid). In view of his reasoning, this would require better organizing and some abandonment of self-realization. At the moment, it is not clear whether the co-housing residents experience the need for changing their communities, or if they view their housing projects as contributions of social sustainability to the city at all. In fact, even though co-housing buildings are labelled as sustainable in research (McCamant & Durrett 2011:273, Krokfors 2012:311) and presented as solutions to housing shortage and population growth by the local authorities (Stattbau 2012/2015:7), the residents that I have spoken to do not subscribe to the concept of sustainability or use the word ‘sustainable’ to describe their projects. This shows that even though there is an idea of co-housing as contributions to sustainability (Stattbau 2012/2015:7), there is a need for further exploring how co-housing residents resonate around their communities and their purposes. I will get to this in the following chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have described the co-housing residents and drawn parallels to them with the concept ‘the creative class’ (Florida 2002) in order to show how their socioeconomic background allows for freedom from rules and less community participation than what is perhaps perceived about co-housing and collective living. I have also wanted to demonstrate that their freedom and autonomy creates a ground for excluding residents that are not of the same socioeconomic background as themselves. This exclusion is not necessarily an advertent or explicit discrimination of lower-income residents, but the need

for a certain income and “stability” level to support the projects means that these kinds of selections are inevitable.

In the next chapter I will explain why this can be an issue and why gentrification in relation to the co-housing projects and their residents is an important topic of debate.

Chapter 5: Co-housing and the city

In this chapter I will approach two factors which I view as important in the goal for social sustainability. One is diversity, which has been shown as lacking in the previous chapter. Here I will illustrate how diversity is viewed by the residents. The second is co-housing projects in relation to their neighbourhoods and to the city and its changes. As has been stated in research, social sustainability has been perceived as a rather problematic concept which does not have clear objectives (Woodcraft 2012:30, Weingaertner & Moberg 2014). However, by exploring how these two factors work in practice and how they are perceived by the residents - diversity in the co-housing communities and the co-housing residents' relationship to their surroundings - I will discuss whether social sustainability can be a realistic goal in the co-housing projects. I will do so through empirical examples and a discussion at the end of the chapter.

Urban growth and a new housing situation

David Harvey (2012), describes “the right to the city” as having the right to “...claim some kind of shaping power over the processes of urbanization, over the ways in which our cities are made and remade” (2012:5). The urgent and radical measures with which this power must be claimed is rooted in the history of cities, where their growth have relied on the labour of the working class for their development (Harvey 2008:24). In view of the current housing situation in Berlin, this sentiment illustrates that the housing shortage and lack of good housing is a development which can be likened to a crisis (Chazan 2016). A lack of access to housing is not "normal", so it should therefore not be looked upon that way.

As a big European city, Berlin has a special history. It did not immediately become a successful economy after the unification of East and West (1989), and for a long time there was a notably low population growth (Kröhnert & Skipper 2010). In contrast to other capitals in Europe, it has not been particularly fast-growing economically. Compared to other German cities, Berlin as a whole has also been relatively poor and this is reflected in parts of its population and in some of its districts. However, over time the image of the city has changed and particularly the Eastern parts have started to develop

in what can be regarded by many as a more positive direction. A sudden interest in the city in the last decade or so and a rise in the economy has set eyes on the housing market as a spot for investment. Migration to the city has increased and a population growth has followed. These changes are part of a development which is expected to continue (Stattbau 2012/2015:7).

The increase of people migrating to the city has resulted in higher demand of housing and also in increasing prices for housing stock. (Geisel 2012/2015:7). One could say that the combination of interest in investment in real-estate and demand for new housing due to population growth means that the city is now in a housing estate “boom” (Berlin Hyp 2016:1). The city’s privately owned property has expanded and rents keep getting higher in all inner-city areas (2012/2015:7). Along with an increase in market-oriented housing in the last decade, private ownership is a growing common form of tenure in Berlin (Berlin Hyp 2016:3). Particularly former Eastern areas where renting and purchasing property is cheaper are becoming attractive (2016:8).

Gentrification and the co-housing projects

The impact of co-housing in the city as either positive or negative is widely discussed among researchers. In the discussion of co-housing and gentrification, there is a critical angle which assumes that gentrification can become intensified when high numbers of families with financial resources are moving in to the same up-and-coming neighbourhoods (Droste 2015:82). This is the same process for many co-housing residents but they move in as a collective with these attributes (Andrej Holm 2010). Although the co-housing projects are in a price range which is not considered affordable to many residents, they are still cheaper than housing in some neighbourhoods which are also going through processes of “upgrading” (Holm in Droste 2015: 82).

At my visit to TeePeeland, I am told by Flieger, who proclaims himself ‘chief’ of the community and the first squatter to settle there, that he is critical of the changes he has seen in Berlin in the last decades. Although he and others at TeePeeland expressed that they liked their co-housing neighbours at Spreefeld, the residents I spoke to were generally not fond of the idea of more *Baugruppen* in Berlin: “It was better before the Wall came

down”, said Flieger at my visit to the community. His statement stood out to me because of its boldness and what it symbolizes about the impact that the fast-paced urbanization in Berlin has had on residents who have lived there before it was considered a “cool” city.

The debate of gentrification in relation to the co-housing initiatives is well known to most of the co-housing residents that I have talked to. With that said, it is not a topic which I found was easy to create a discussion about. The area of Prenzlauer Berg, where Pappel44 is located has become a hub for investors and businesses in the last couple of years. Laura tells me that Californian development companies are bidding on one of Germany’s largest supermarket chains, Kaiser’s, across the street from her home and that Scandinavian businesses are setting up offices in the area in what they consider cheap real-estate. When discussing their co-housing building in the gentrification process, she says: “I mean common, it’s Prenzlauer Berg, I don’t need to be afraid of gentrifying this area, it’s already done”.

She then adds:

It’s something I really try not to think so much about. I don’t like that it’s getting more gentrified than it is already, but I can’t help contributing to it. If I move somewhere, I’m white, I have some type of income and I love to live here. So, I don’t know, sure I gentrify the area a tiny bit already but blah.

In the context of global investment and gentrification processes in modern cities (Lilja 2011:29-30), co-housing projects are possibly not a large impact because they are generally so low in numbers (Chiodelli & Baglione 2014:21). Therefore the buildings and their residents cannot, as Laura have stated, be regarded as isolated factors in the problems with neighbourhoods becoming more expensive and the changes which ensue (Lilja 2011:28-29). However, coupled with the number of private initiatives that are gathering in the city, they are symbols of ‘hyper-gentrification’ (Johannes Fiedler 2014:72). What I have found is that in several residents’ answers, there is a denial of agreeing to the idea that their co-housing community is participating in a gentrification process. Udo, who

openly admits that they are probably partly responsible, is frustrated that the discussion is being directed at them specifically. He says:

While maybe the housing activists might argue that we have a housing crisis because the rents are rising and so forth, people live in homes and they seem to be able to afford homes, and buildings are being built, so the question is what criteria do we actually look at when deciding whether we have a housing crisis or not. Berlin is very popular, people are moving here, so I sometimes think, you know, “What do you expect? How can we fix the price of commodity that is very hot?”

When discussing who should do something about housing shortage and rental rises, other factors have been brought to my attention. Some residents have suggested that the city authorities in Berlin should do more to support *Baugruppen* co-housing projects with public sponsorship to make them financially equitable. At the moment, I am told, the city authorities are selling land to developing companies instead of supplying it to *Baugruppen* initiatives. Christoph Wagner, architect of OUR SPACE, suggests that the department for urban planning is open to supporting *Baugruppen* but that the financial department is not. Therefore, in view of this reasoning, the co-housing communities are described as not getting the chance to show what can be done through the concept of co-housing.

The investment processes which have increased in Prenzlauer Berg are a result of the current wave of what Lilja (2011) calls super-gentrification (2011:29). In Berlin, these processes have presumably increased since the economic crisis when foreign investors started looking for ‘*Betongold*’ (concrete gold) (Claire Jones 2014) in real-estate in hopes of generating interests instead of putting money in banks or funds. Laura tells me that, in relation to the external forces of investment, “local ownership will be a good thing in the end” because the current development is difficult to stop. As global capital becomes more powerful, she says, their investments in co-housing cooperatives are a better option than having foreign investors buy land and real-estate in their neighbourhoods. In this context, Matteo similarly claims that buying property is a better choice than renting a home in the current rental rise situation: “...if I wouldn’t have this flat I would spend a lot of money

to rent a big flat with surroundings. I would contribute to a rise in the rents, so in this way I built a new living surface” [sic].

‘Anti-gentrifiers’

What Laura and Matteo tell me is that their choice to be part of a co-housing project is a better investment for themselves but also a better housing alternative for the city. This shows that there are different views on how to counteract the current development of rental rise and gentrification processes. In this part I will describe standpoints and actions which are directed against gentrification in Berlin. One is from the city authorities and another is from local residents. The third is from the co-housing residents where they explain their viewpoints and how they view the criticism directed towards the projects.

In the context of rental rises, there have been attempts by the city to break the trend of rising rents and reduce subletting for purposes of financial gain (Berlin Hyp 2015:7). On June 1st 2015 a *Mietpreisbremse* (rental cap) was introduced and although rents declined directly after the cap was first introduced, it is not clear whether it has had any effect yet (Berlin Hyp 2016:1). Florian tells me that the rent cap is “theoretical” and presumably not an action which will create much change. Moreover, a law, *Zweckentfremdungs-Verbotsverordnung* (ban on vacation rentals) (2016:18) has been in place since May 1st 2016 to restrict subletting rooms through holiday rental apartment services such as AirBnB (Soo 2016). In the context of rising rents through external investments, self-initiated and self-funded co-housing projects are protected from the market’s rental fluctuations. Once the land is owned and the building is rented or owned by the cooperative, it is difficult if not impossible for investors or other interested parties to speculate on the land and the individual apartments in the co-housing buildings.

However, new housing is not affordable to all city residents who need a new flat or who would like to live in central parts of Berlin. This concern has been expressed by local activists. On the façade of co-housing project Wohnen am Hochdamm in Alt-Treptow (See map on page 21), one of several graffiti tags displays the work of street activists who have expressed their disapproval of the trend of co-housing. On the mural and the entry

of the co-housing building, 'Baugruppen= gentrifizierer'¹⁰ is tagged in capitals. This is displayed in Image 7 below. Another tag reads 'Kein Eigentum bei Wohnungsnot'¹¹, urging that property should not be owned as long as there is a housing shortage, and on a third place on a wall of the building, the rent per square meter is spelled out with a clear message, 'Haut ab' ('Piss off')¹². This is displayed in Image 8. This kind of graffiti is visible in several parts of East Berlin (Heinsohn in Twark & Hildebrandt 2015:129), and Wohnen am Hochdamm is only one example of a new building project where discontent about the housing situation is displayed. However, this co-housing building in particular stands out because it is big, with a large population (215 residents) and stands in stark contrast with the surrounding area. In a response to the tagging, Wohnen am Hochdamm have released a 'gentrification certificate' claiming that they are not big earners or malicious gentrifiers (Karla Pappel 2010). In the certificate they state that they would prefer to have a dialogue with people who think differently regarding this issue, instead of having their home vandalized with graffiti tags (ibid).



Image 7: Baugruppen = gentrifizierer (Source: My own photograph)

¹⁰ Translation to English: 'Building groups = gentrifiers'.

¹¹ Ibid. Translation to English: 'No property when there is a housing shortage'.



Image 8: Haut ab (Source: My own photograph)

This type of response is an example of how co-housing residents are sensitive to how others perceive them and conscious of the process of gentrification. Some residents have even chosen to live in co-housing building by a *Genossenschaft* (rental cooperative) for this reason. I ask Laura of Pappel44 if she could see herself choosing to live in a private *Baugruppe* co-housing project. She laughs, says that it is a tough question and that politically she likes her form of community much better because the other types of co-housing are still “in the same rental rise situation” as private residential buildings. Still, she says that she has looked into investing in a private *Baugruppe* because it means “building property”, a process which she views as securing her future.

Max, a member of OUR SPACE, tells me that he views his investment in his co-housing project as a long-term commitment and a form of pension which will protect him from market fluctuations. He currently rents his apartment in a co-housing community where his brother lives, and owns an apartment in another private *Baugruppe* which he sublets to another tenant: “In 25 years it’s when I will be retiring, then I can have a similar living

standard still, living in a nice house without paying a lot of rent”, he says. “It gives you security to have a property, you don’t know the way it’s [the market] developing.”

In my conversations with residents, I have found that their investment in a co-housing project is partly motivated by the idea that their community can improve the city’s current housing situation. When we discuss what their building might contribute with to the area, Laura says: “Stability, definitely stability [in the house] but also in the neighbourhood”. In our interview, she clearly expresses that she thinks that a rental cooperative protects the city and the residents, as opposed to an investment in a private *Baugruppe*. Each co-housing resident that is part of the initial phase of creating a *Baugruppe* has to pay off a mortgage within approximately 30 years. I have been told that when loans and mortgages are paid, the residents will be debt-free and the next tenant who joins the project will not be paying much at all to live in the project. In view of this reasoning, it would mean that the person who takes over the apartment will not have to pay rent. This is a calculation which excludes the maintenance costs of the building (technical and administrative care). However, it has repeatedly been brought up when we have discussed the advantages of their co-housing projects. By lowering rents in their co-housing community, Laura and Udo tell me that their building and community is an investment for themselves, but also for the subsequent residents. Laura says:

It’s about the heights of the rent, in five years, this [their co-housing project Pappel44] will be lowering the *Mietspiegel* [rent index, average rent within a district]. Now we are at the upper end of it, but probably in five years we aren’t anymore, and we will not rise our rent, so over time we will lower the average.

She adds that the rents are low for a reason and that “it’s not because they [the residents in the building] are too stupid to ask for more money”. In a way, she says, her community are “anti-gentrifiers” making rental conditions in the neighbourhood better. However, this she says is under the conditions that the residents in the community can agree on keeping rents low: “It also depends on what political decisions you take within your gentrifying home”, she tells me. Udo similarly believes that in a few years their co-housing building will have a fixed rent, and in comparison to “conventional rental properties” in

the same neighbourhood, the costs of living there will be much lower. As a way of paying it forward he hopes that the apartments in their co-housing projects can be inherited in the same standard by upcoming residents: “We can say that it’s our privilege”, he says “...but it’s everyone’s privilege who lives in this particular house. When I move out, the person who moves in after me can still enjoy that privilege”.

In view of the comments from the residents on this topic, *Baugruppen* co-housing projects are partly self-sustained and self-realised projects created to ensure safety when the market is fluctuating. For some residents, like Matteo, their home is a reaction to the mainstream housing market (which he has been quoted as saying in Chapter 4). In a sense, their co-housing initiatives are a response to what is currently not offered in terms of housing. However, the co-housing projects are made with a large part of self-realisation (Suckow 2009:11). By protecting themselves from investors and from speculation, the co-housing residents become investors themselves whilst organising a home where they can determine the conditions which suit them. In Laura’s view, this is possible as long as the community has the same philosophy about solidarity.

The explanations given here of why the co-housing projects are a good alternative suggest that the rise of *Baugruppen* co-housing projects could be a result of changes in real estate prices and rents. City dwellers have been presented with the choice to either accept high prices if they want to live in a central location, or move out to the suburbs or outskirts where rents and prices are lower. Thereby the co-housing projects are constructed on the basis of a variety of factors; a search for a social context, and a common cultural and social understanding of other residents. By looking at these events, one can see that the socioeconomic class of co-housing residents enables their kind of housing community. However, co-housing residents’ intentions to live together are not necessarily just rooted in ‘enclave-thinking’ based on socioeconomic class as argued by Chiodelli & Baglione (2014:23-24). The co-housing residents are also in large part trying to keep up with the housing market and its forces, whilst looking for a way to opt out of its conditions.

Working towards social diversity in co-housing

The allure of co-housing is not difficult to understand; inter-generational buildings which house several age groups in the city and which breed friendships and other casual, but still useful relationships. Florian says: “I’ve never known anybody living in a project like this one before but the idea of it is very appealing. Mixed generations and even better, mixed origins, people of different social structures”. In this statement, Florian paints a picture of co-housing which in reality is not what has been achieved. The diversity in the buildings that I have found is based on the mixing of age groups, similar to previous studies on co-housing (Coele 2014; McCamant & Durrett 2011:9-10). Moreover, the projects are almost unanimously initiated by groups whose residents are German: “How many Turkish *Baugruppen* are there really? None, right. I would think so, yeah, which is crazy in Berlin”, says Laura, referring to Berlin’s large Turkish population.

Chiodelli & Baglione (2014) discuss co-housing projects as “collective but private” (2014:1). This implies that their private aspects – that they are privately financed and owned – are prominent behind a façade of a collective character. As has been mentioned in chapter 3 (methodology), in conversations with TeePeeland residents and the director of *Verdrängung hat viele Gesichter* (Schwarzer Hahn 2014), *Baugruppen* co-housing residents are gaining notoriety as a group in Berlin for being contradictory. In my meetings with both parties, the description of *Baugruppen* co-housing residents were similar. They were described by Flieger and other TeePeelanders as Germans from Bavaria (“Schwäbische Schwaben”¹³) who drink soy lattes, are concerned about organic food, the environment and discuss political issues. This was described as hypocritical because while professing leftist ideals, the co-housing residents are participating in a capitalist market through building private housing initiatives. Still, when speaking to the co-housing residents they have been concerned with similar issues as the activists that criticise them; the changing housing market, gentrification and who has “the right to the city”. Many co-housing residents that I have met have expressed that their communities should be more diverse, albeit with different views of diversity. An attempt to diversify OUR SPACE’s

¹³At TeePeeland, Schwaben were explained to me as a “tribe” from Bavaria that have their own culture and customs. According to a few TeePeeland residents, many people moving to Berlin are specifically from Schwaben.

occupational profile of predominantly cultural workers was once made by taking in a lawyer. Max recalls that “it failed in some way”. When I ask in what way, he says that he is not sure but that it probably did not work with the group.

In defining social sustainability as a process which contributes to urban development, it entails some kind of participation by city residents (Weingaertner & Moberg in Woodcraft 2012:32). In co-housing, this means that they initiate projects which last over time. The initiation and sustenance of co-housing require work and time spent outside of the residents’ day jobs. Florida (2002) describes how ‘the creative class’ are interested in participating in community work on their own terms (2002:96) and that their involvement is a part of their creative identity which functions as a form of self-realisation (2002: *ibid*). This suggests that work towards more diversity in the communities is a possibility if it benefits the residents in some way. However, some residents have specified that they could see another form of housing come to life if the co-housing concept was prioritized for its potential. This would require subsidies or more financial support.

Udo also emphasises that there are, in fact, “more radical” co-housing projects that are experimenting with a possible future model that is built on more democratic standards, such as the Mietshäuser Syndikat¹⁴. The Mietshäuser Syndikat, he says, can be described as a “legal hack” or legalised squats that circumvent the conventional housing rules:

Yeah, so I think we are more *bourgeois* or, I mean, I mentioned to you how much I actually put in to become eligible to actually live here [40% of the building costs, “that’s a lot, that’s a hurdle”], and their [the Mietshäuser Syndikat’s] financing structure is different, they actually encourage micro-credits where you ask your aunts for a 1000 [Euros] and your uncle for a 1000 and maybe your best friend for a 1000, and suddenly you have enough money and you don’t need to be a rich kid, you just need a few good friends.

As a co-housing model, the Mietshäuser Syndikat differs from the *Baugruppen* co-housing projects since they apply political principles to reach goals of diversity. In the previous

¹⁴See www.syndikat.org/en

chapter, some form of social principles have been shown to be lacking in the co-housing communities. In addition to being based on a form of crowd-funding to finance their projects instead of bank loans, Udo tells me that the process of electing new members to some projects of the Mietshäuser Syndikat is made through a quota of diversity categories: gender, sexual orientation and nationality. I ask him whether he would choose a more “radical” initiative and live in a community organised like the Mietshäuser Syndikat. He answers: “I like my neighbours, and I don’t want to make housing the prime objective of, you know, what I’m dealing with, and so I chose convenience”.

In view of Udo’s and of other members’ reasoning, it seems that this attitude is characteristic for many of the co-housing residents. Financial convenience is more important than to actively work towards broadening the communities’ profiles. Even though there are those who want to do more to diversify and provide shelter through the communities, it appears as if altruistic ideals are not always met by others, and that this has the potential to create tension and incoherence in the group. Particularly, this is when money is given precedence over solidarity. Even though there have been mentions of some kind of neighbourhood community involvement and a temporary housing of refugees, the realisation of such initiatives has been described by the co-housing residents as difficult. ASt21 have housed a refugee family in their guest apartment, but according to Walter, it is a topic which has been at the centre of disagreement. In the other two buildings housing refugees has been discussed but not realised. The management and “logistics”, as Udo describes it, are too demanding and it is a decision which has been contested in all the communities I have visited.

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To move towards equal access to housing and distribution of financial resources, Harvey (2012) stresses that we need to question whose rights are identified in the discussion about the right to the city, and who gets to claim that right and give it meaning (2012: xv). With the direction that the city is taking of more privatisation, it is clear that the right to the city belongs to those with financial resources. A majority of co-housing residents have expressed awareness of their status as a higher than average income group and been open

to the idea of making their communities more diverse. With that said, none of the residents have an answer on how to actively create diversity in their communities. At the moment, the diversity in the communities is based on different age groups (Stattbau 2012/2015:7). This is also the only factor of diversity which has been described by the city authorities to be working in co-housing (2012/2015:7).

In a city like Berlin which has been financially unstable but is now becoming attractive to settle in, there is a new incentive to buy property (Berlin Hyp 2016:1). This is reflected in Laura's answer and several other residents who state that they would buy property because it means "safety". Moreover, in Laura's reasoning, the co-housing communities are contributing with "stability" in their neighbourhoods by regulating rents. However, the stability that co-housing will bring can be questioned when, as Lilja (2011) has argued, a sudden interest in former neighbourhoods by middle-class residents also change the conditions for lower-income residents (2011:28-29). Some residents have suggested that larger forces of gentrification (Lilja 2011:29-30) are more powerful in affecting rental prices than their co-housing projects. Although it is true that the co-housing residents are not a large force in gentrification, on a small-scale level the co-housing projects and their residents are having an effect on locals. The activists that have tagged *Wohnen am Hochdamm* (see page 56-57) tell a different story of the impact that a new co-housing building can have on the area.

To some locals it is a provocation that co-housing groups are choosing to live in former East Berlin, and an action which contradicts their vision of a diverse and open city. However, the co-housing residents are far from being the only residents in the city who live in homogeneous groups and are leading "self-segregating" lifestyles (Ruiu 2014:317). They are part of a development in the housing market which is becoming increasingly exclusive to many people.

Conclusion

In this final empirical chapter, I have aimed to show that socioeconomic diversity appears difficult to engage in for the co-housing residents. In speaking with residents, they state

that the market and the financial requirements of the co-housing projects are reasons why their communities are not available to a variety of residents. Sustainability, inclusion and diversity become outward statements, but seldom implemented. The residents have financial and cultural resources and they are very well-informed and conscious about the housing situation and how others perceive them. Therefore, from what I have found in this chapter it is possible to say that co-housing residents are realizing their ideas and adapting to the rules of the housing market, but are not necessarily positive to how it affects the city. However, this suggests that the goal of social sustainability in co-housing is affected in a negative sense by processes of privatization and gentrification.

Furthermore, the findings in this chapter suggest that social sustainability in co-housing projects is not easy to achieve. Therefore, the idea of “the right to the city” (Harvey 2012) is important to acknowledge as a visionary critique of injustice and the unfair conditions in cities. The idealism of “the right to the city” is important. However, further actions are necessary for creating realistic changes. Ideally, urban co-housing would be available as a housing alternative which is not as dependent on capital and the skills of people. However, as long as the co-housing projects are not supported financially by the city or the government, the solution to these issues is transferred to the initiators and residents of the co-housing projects. It means that their co-housing projects become their own responsibilities, as opposed to contributions to the neighbourhoods.

Final conclusions

This study has demonstrated some of the reasons why *Baugruppen* co-housing is growing in popularity in Berlin. I have explored the views of co-housing residents and the ideals which shape the creation and sustenance of their housing projects. As the population in Berlin grows, the availability of land to build new co-housing projects on is diminishing (Vollmer 2016). Since 2010, the construction costs of the projects have also increased significantly¹⁵ (ibid). Therefore less *Baugruppen* co-housing projects are being built. In view of these changes, it is difficult to foresee the future development of *Baugruppen* co-housing in Berlin and whether it can be regarded as a trend which is expected to continue. Furthermore, the study has highlighted some of the aspects which makes the topic of inner-city co-housing relevant to include in debates about social sustainability. There is a perception that modern co-housing can be a positive development in times of rapid population growth in cities. On the other hand, there are some viewpoints in research which contest the idea that co-housing in its current model could be a contribution to sustainable urban development (Chiodeli & Baglione 2014, Andrej Holm 2010).

The co-housing projects are criticised in part because their residents have purchased land and own property. This is not true in all cases of co-housing, which my contacts with residents of co-housing projects has indicated. The criticism is shown very visibly by graffiti tagging. It is a method of criticizing the projects which is visible but perhaps not very effective. The critical view on co-housing could also be focused upwards and deal with structural processes through political involvement and dialogue with planners and politicians. It is also of interest that co-housing residents in fact have similar concerns regarding the housing situation as their critics. The residents of the co-housing projects have expressed this in interviews. This could mean that there is a general worry about not finding a satisfactory place to live in Berlin and that this is an issue which concerns different parts of the population.

¹⁵In 2016, construction costs of *Baugruppen* are estimated to be around 3.000 € per square meter, with an additional 1.000 € advised for the cooperative per square meter.

For the co-housing residents I have interviewed, one of the important reasons to invest in co-housing is to gain a position on the housing market. However, the housing market forces are strong and the co-housing projects have to follow and adapt to them. This means that the co-housing projects are not strong enough to fight for visions of social sustainability, such as diversity. Although some research suggests that co-housing projects contribute to sustainable urban development, this study has shown that they do not yet create conditions for a broader population. As has been demonstrated in the two empirical chapters, the aim for creating co-housing with diversity and social inclusion stays on an abstract level and there is no action taken by co-housing residents to change this. Inclusivity and sustainability are important social and political goals and they have been declared so by the city authorities (Stattbau 2012/2015:7). However, they have not been mentioned by residents as intentions with creating the co-housing projects. One important intention of the residents is to share everyday life with people with whom they also share values, without a significant or well-defined ideology. Their collectivism is expressed through their shared space. However, their shared space is not unique and nowadays it is becoming common in regular residential buildings too. The most prominent communal aspect of the co-housing projects which I have studied is the sharing of costs and their participatory building process.

In view of these findings, an area which would require more research is thus what it takes to create socially sustainable housing in urban areas since it seems that this is where obstacles in working towards social values are prevalent. Lockyer (2010) has argued that intentional communities can foster ideals of sustainability and that similar philosophies are heightened in the communal context (2010:17). This is contrary to what I have found about *Baugruppen* co-housing. It appears more as if visions of innovation and sustainability with the co-housing projects stay on a small-scale level and that they are created by the residents, for the residents.

The city authorities (Stattbau 2012/2015:7) describe co-housing as projects which can contribute to a sustainable city (2012/2015:7). However, this study has shown that the projects are communities with residents of social status and financial resources. This socioeconomic group stands in contrast to the population as a whole, and therefore also

to what Harvey (2012) means by including everyone in the right to the city (2012:3). The objectives of sustainability remain unclear and can be used to the advantage of whoever is using it (Woodcraft 2012:30). This is especially if goals of inclusion and affordability are not clearly defined or followed.

Urban planning is constantly engaged in social processes. Therefore, the discussion about sustainable cities ought to adapt to the fluctuations and dynamics in cities. In my view, the concept of sustainability promoted by politicians, urban planners and architects as a reason to invest more in the trend of co-housing needs a further discussion. The critical evaluation of co-housing is necessary and anthropologists are needed to analyse and further spread understanding of concepts which have been highlighted in this thesis. 'Liveable', 'affordable' and 'sustainable' are highly relative concepts but they can be given a meaning in certain contexts. We can increase theorizing about such concepts when they are used to describe sustainability projects. With this in mind, it could mean that a common language and ideology is necessary for social sustainability to solve social disparities in the city.

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