FROM PASSIVE HOUSE TO ACTIVE CITIZENS: learning from Co-Housing

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Area of Research: Energy & spatial planning

Research Summary: Planning cultures are changing in the wake of new forms of citizenship and the new challenges of energy-transition and climate change. Community-led housing initiatives (co-housing) are on the rise in Europe and represent 'micro-labs' for participative planning and low-carbon building. Through co-housing practices residents move from being 'consumer' to '(co-) producers', of housing, care, energy, services, semi-public space and so on. The second shift in roles that potentially takes place in co-housing projects is the breaking with gender stereotypes. Analyzing co-housing initiatives contribute insights to which way the planning cultures need to change. To provide a solid basis for such insights, a method to evaluate co-housing performance relative to standard/mainstream housing needs to be established. The research looks at this thematic from different angles: the impact of housing initiatives on emerging forms of participative urbanism; the use of renewable energies and the potential of clustered, self-managed housing for decentralized networks; and the model of 'Urbanism of proximity' as precondition for gender-equality. The aim is to identify the bottlenecks and chances of self-organized housing for spatial planning and energy transition.

Research Methodology: The research develops through desk-research, plan-analyses, fieldwork in the Netherlands and comparative studies in France & Germany, in the context of the European network of co-housing researchers CoHoCoRe, as result of the first European conference on co-housing research that I organized in 2012.