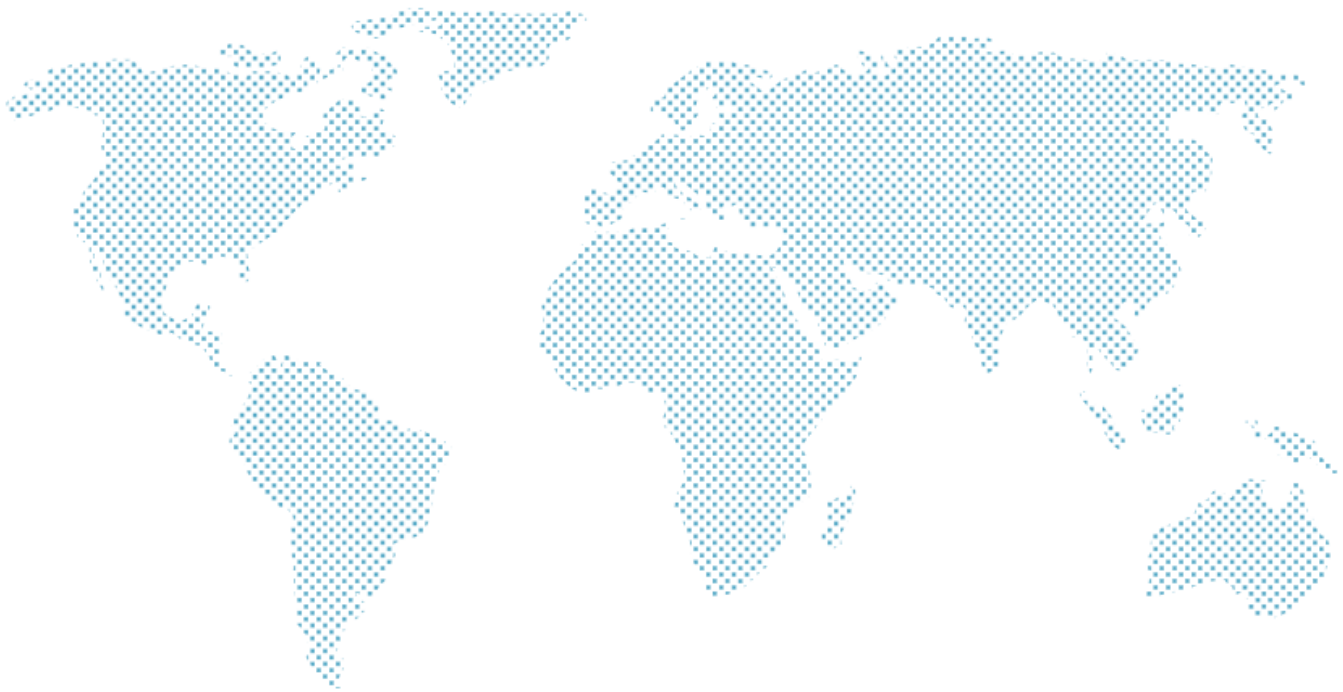


# ALTERNATIVE LIVING IN FREIBURG, GERMANY

MAEVE REILLY, FALL 2021





During my time in Freiburg, I traveled around the city and took pictures of different types of housing in an attempt to understand a little more about the alternative living culture in Germany. I defined

‘alternative living’ pretty loosely and included pretty much any part of day to day life that differed from my experiences as an American.

Immediately, I noticed that there was more diversity in housing types. A short 10 minutes outside of the city center, I found a tiny house village in the corner of a small district called Vauban (a former French troops’ stomping grounds where many old military buildings were repurposed). In another direction, I was greeted by a beautiful neighborhood in which each resident has access to their own garden. Within Freiburg, there were also social housing complexes, cottages, regular apartments, cooperatives, townhouses, student villages with student bars (essentially common rooms that played music and sold alcohol), and both large and small single family homes. It still amazes me how a somewhat small city can showcase such a broad range of housing.

Above, you can see a few examples of the homes I saw. From the top left to the bottom right, the pictures show two homes within a cooperative (a street where each homeowner participates in designing the homes and rules of the neighborhood), a stand-alone cottage, a tiny house village, a social housing complex, a student dorm, and an example of the public transportation people used in the city. I included the last picture and wrote a blog post about public transportation because it is such a significant part of people’s daily lives in Freiburg in a way that it is not (at least in the American cities I have lived in). I thought of it as an especially important part of alternative living.

I was also interested in the social, cultural, and environmental implications of these different housing structures, and I found that ultimately, Germany’s housing is pretty environmentally sustainable, because of both green design and the fact that more people usually occupy smaller spaces that are close together. Socially, Freiburg caters to a more economically diverse population than my home city. People can live in social housing for several years, and affordable housing options such as cooperatives are also available.

One of my favorite experiences related to my Blocker project was asking two young women in an apartment how they felt about living there. The part of the city I was in during this ‘interview’ was known for being not particularly nice, somewhat poor, structurally ugly, and dangerous. However, the two women said they thought the area had everything they needed, and that if they could change anything about their living situation, they would want more recreational opportunities. To me, this, among my other experiences, illustrated that a) Germans are pretty open and willing to answer questions and b) that people’s notions about certain places can be completely wrong.

Being back home, I want to take everything I have learned and apply it to my environmental area of study and hopefully bring some German inspiration into future projects I do!