

Supporting Integrative Processes

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The home as the
most important social setting

Who is not aware of those densely populated quarters in Europe's big cities¹ inhabited by immigrants – and mostly only immigrants? They are often unpleasant places where unemployment, alcoholism, crime and especially the complete lack of positive prospects predominate. These are urban districts where no locals want to live and where the police can only go about their work with the support of special units. Inappropriately we call them ghettos in false reference to the legendary Jewish quarter in Cannaregio (Venice). These quarters clearly show the destructive power that can be found in a residential area. However, it is a power that could just as well be used for positive purposes.

*The power that
can be found in a
residential quarter*

It is therefore the right time to identify what opportunities are inherent in a housing estate and what chances present themselves if we only know how to use them. Here Sozialbau took on a pioneering role. It is the first limited-profit, cooperatively-organised company group specifically to take up and document this subject.

Where one lives is the primary location where everyday integrative processes take place. Alongside school and place of work it is perhaps the most important social environment. This is where concepts of life are exemplified as visible and common modes of behaviour. And this is where children, women, men, the elderly and young people all live. This is where they spend valuable time, during the day and night, during the week and at the weekend. And this is where the learning process reaches them all, even educationally disadvantaged groups. The place of residence is essential and the doctrine of immigrant-friendly parallel societies is false. The belittling designation of such quarters as “Little Italy” or “Chinatown” basically only describes a deficit. It is therefore astonishing that some of our well-meaning contemporaries still argue in favour of such obstacles to integration.² Or is this just making a virtue of necessity?

1) Saunders, 2013, p. 399 2) GdW, 2015, p. 33

Of course, integration also happens when nothing is done and things are allowed to run their course. However, the speed and quality of its progress and the side-effects that accompany it are most certainly dependent on the specific circumstances. In any case the aim should be that migrants see themselves as normal citizens and as “people”³ on the same level as others as quickly as possible, and are also treated as such. To achieve this naturally requires the willingness of migrants – exclusive social contacts only within one’s own ethnicity is thus a considerable barrier to integration. However, its success also depends on local provisions. At the same time those by no means ineffective actors in politics and the media who continually strive to create a negative atmosphere should not be overlooked. This goes as far as actively pursuing exclusion whereby many honest efforts are massively undermined.

Civil society has work to do

However, one thing should be made clear: the successful progress of integrative processes requires the efforts of all those in the migrant community.⁴ The requisite behavioural modifications can and should not only be prompted by “higher powers”. Here “civil society”⁵ has work to do, in this case the residents of housing estates as “verantwortlich handelnde Subjekte” (people who behave responsibly),⁶ because native actors are indispensable for successful social contact. Nevertheless, the fact that in the public at large efforts towards integration are frequently and for the sake of simplicity only demanded from migrants shows a lack of awareness, if not even malicious intent.

*Native actors are
indispensable*

Sozialbau has continually been particularly active and present on the housing estates under its supervision over the first 10 years because one of the experiences of the “Wohnmodell inter-ethnische Nachbarschaft” (Interethnic Neighbourhood Housing Model) has been the importance of a competent contact person on the spot. The housing community has been supported by caretakers such as the now legendary Mr. Akrami⁷ at the Liesing “Globaler Hof” (“Global Estate”), but also by a wide range of community-building activities (see the next contribution in this publication).

Whereby supervised housing is by no means the idea and certainly no kind of paternalism with respect to residents, whose self-organisation is always desirable. In fact it is only a matter of awareness, interest

3) Kaufmann, 2001, p. 202

4) Integrationsbericht, 2016, p. 85

5) Süßmuth, 2006, p. 156

6) Popper, 2003, p. 207

7) Brech, 2003, p. 120

and active steering. The plan is that after 10 years such a housing estate should be managed like any other.

It is now just over 15 years since the first residents of the “Inter-ethnic Neighbourhood Housing Model”⁸ were able to move into their flats. After years of intensive preparatory work, a successfully concluded property developer competition and a construction period of almost two years, everyday life could start on the housing estate in June 2000. It was clear to everyone that the theoretical ideas would now be subjected to a reality check.

The scheme that was already planned in 1996 was new and ambitious. It was the first time that a well-known housing association had decided to realise a transparent, exemplary interethnic housing project regardless of – or even precisely because of – conspicuously increasing xenophobia. There was the risk of failure and also no shortage of critical voices. However, the Sozialbau staff, along with the advocates and supporters of the objective in the City of Vienna organisations and of course the architects and scientists invited to take part, unreservedly supported the concept from the beginning. Since then Sozialbau, and thereby the whole cooperative association in this group of companies, has actively and offensively proclaimed itself in favour of the promotion and support of integrative processes of migrants on their housing estates.

*There was
no shortage
of criticism*

However, it would be wrong to suppose that integration was a completely new theme in the range of remits of this service-oriented housing company. Cooperative housing associations have basically always worked according to the unshakeable principles of the International Cooperative Alliance, according to which all members have equal rights irrespective of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, colour, physical or mental capabilities and without distinction as to language, creed, political views, or national or social origin. Basic principles⁹ that were one of the reasons why the “cooperative idea” was included in UNESCO’s list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2016.

New homes for over 23,000

Thus it was always one of the central tasks of the Sozialbau housing management company to ensure that the residents – who are simultaneously joint owners and members of the relevant housing association – feel at ease in their apartment building and can play a part in their housing community. On every new housing estate a group of freshly

⁸) Ludl, 2003, p. 11 ⁹) Böök, 1992, p. 92

mixed, very different residents who mostly did not previously know each other come together to form a new housing community. What is developed here together over the early years has always had to do with integration or the reception of people into a new social fabric.

Many company procedures were changed

We are now in the unique position of once again being able to evaluate the “Interethnic Neighbourhood Housing Model” after 15 years.¹⁰ This lighthouse project brought about lasting changes in Sozialbau’s housing work. The staff and departments had to come to grips with the subject, many company procedures were changed and a whole series of totally new provisions were added.

Taking this initial project into account, all of Sozialbau’s considerable new building activity over the last 15 years was evaluated on the basis of the available administrative data. During this period 23,530 people found a new home in the cooperative Sozialbau group due to the new construction. To be precise: over this time 69 new housing estates with a total of 8,315 apartments were completed and already at first occupancy, besides the main tenants, a further 9,942 cohabitants could be welcomed – all in all 18,257 residents. This figure includes the next generation, already consisting of 3,556 children and young people. Subsequent changes in tenancy increased the number of main tenants and cohabitants by a further 5,273 people making up the above-mentioned total of 23,530.

The proportion of 83.1 % Austrian citizens among the main tenants at first occupancy – only here do we have very reliable information – may be surprising but shows that with astute allocation and excellent housing quality the particularly important majority of Austrian citizens among the residents could be ensured. In addition, a notable proportion of main tenants with a migration background already had Austrian citizenship when they moved in.

Attitudes can change

A xenophobic attitude is based on a subjectively perceived collision of interests,¹¹ it is not an inborn characteristic but is socially conditioned and thus also a shapeable construct. Alienness and familiarity are relationships and as such are determined by interaction: they can be influenced and changed. Social solidarity can be learned¹² and it is apparent that social contact with neighbours¹³ can be a remedy for xenophobia that is just as simple as it is effective.¹⁴

¹⁰⁾ See Brech/Feigelfeld in this publication ¹¹⁾ Lebhart/Münz, 2003, p. 351

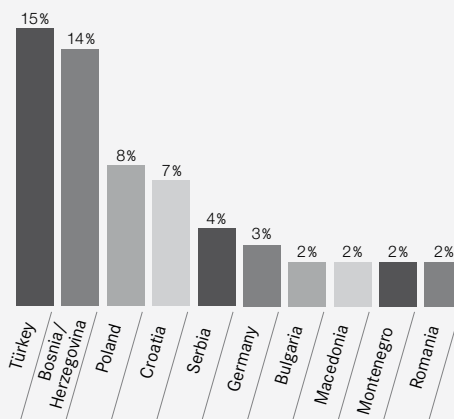
¹²⁾ Ludl, 2001, p. 23 ¹³⁾ Kohlbacher / Reeger, 2000, p. 124 ¹⁴⁾ Kallmeyer, 2002, p. 155

At first occupancy the proportion of residents with a migration background, i.e. foreign nationals and Austrian citizens born abroad, reached a cautiously estimated 38.1 %. This corresponds approximately to the 36.8 % of people with a migration background among the population of Vienna in 2015.

Top 10 of first tenants with migration background

according to origin (country) as a percentage

Source: all the diagrams in this article are based on surveys carried out by Sozialbau



15 % of main tenants were from Turkey, 14 % from Bosnia, 8 % from Poland and 7 % from Croatia, followed by 4 % from Serbia, 3 % from Germany and 2 % each from Bulgaria, Macedonia, Montenegro and Romania. A total of 97 countries of origin was established.

Because according to housing cooperative rules only one adult per household could be the main tenant and thereby a member of the housing cooperative, residents of larger households always had to agree which of the adults would be the main tenant. An extremely varied pattern emerged here. With 54.7 % the majority of main tenants, on the basis of all tenancies, was female. With 45.3 % the men remained a clear minority. However, depending on ethnic origin, considerable differences were seen. The proportion of women main tenants from Bangladesh, for example, was only 4 %. In contrast with tenancies of migrants from Slovakia which reached a striking 83 %. Men were in the majority in households originally from Afghanistan with 68 %, Croatia with 64 %, Romania with 63 %, Turkey with 62 % and Bosnia with 60 %. On the other hand the proportion of women was in the majority among main tenants from Austria with 57 %, from Serbia 56 %, from Bulgaria 54 %, from Poland 53 % and among migrants from Germany 51 %.

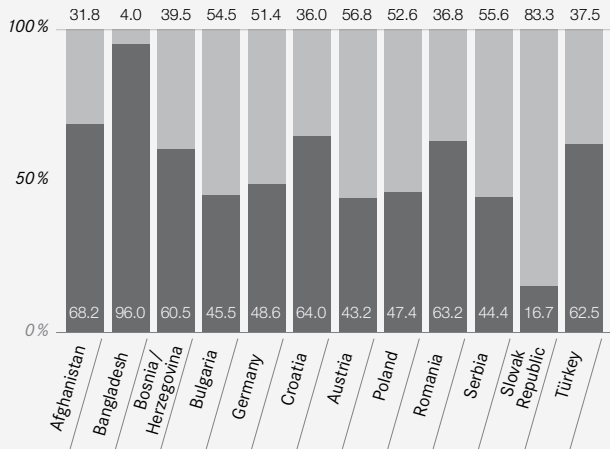
35 % of foreign main tenants came from EU countries and 51 % from European non-EU countries, whereby Turkey was counted as European.

Main tenants from Asia made up 11 % and from Africa 2 %. With 0.4 %, tenants from America were just on the threshold of being noticed.

First tenants / proportion of women and men

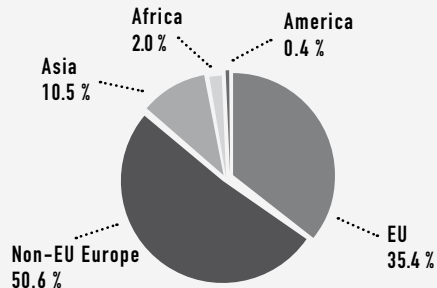
according to nationality as a percentage

Women
Men



Foreign first tenants

according to origin as a percentage



In newly constructed housing we see comparatively young residents, a total of 59.7% of first occupants were younger than 40 years old. This proportion was similar with Austrians at 59.6% as with residents without Austrian citizenship at 60.1%. A similar picture is seen with the proportion of residents over 40, for Austrians the figure was 40.4% and for foreigners 39.9%. Thus there was no particular difference between age at first occupancy between Austrians and migrants.

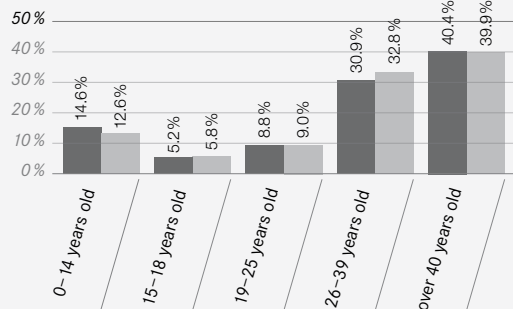
Also interesting in our survey was the extent to which our target group used the many channels open to contact Sozialbau, which are used by more than 700 residents per day (whereby each household in the Sozialbau group uses them three times per year on average). In fact, during our observation period the foreign households in our target group used the facilities 5.3% less often than Austrian households. This

may be due to limited language abilities or uncertainty about being able to express themselves precisely on the telephone. On the other hand the subjects of calls – whether reporting repairs or complaints – was practically identical for migrants and Austrians. Incidentally, no particular frequency of subjects that result from the special characteristics of life with neighbours of different ethnicity could be found.

Age of first residents

according to nationality
as a percentage

■ non-Austrian citizenship
■ Austrian citizenship



More than just any old housing estate

Work at the grass roots on the spot makes the difference, this is where the wheat is separated from the chaff. Sozialbau housing estates and apartment houses are managed from the outset according to in-house principles to be sustainably resident-friendly and community-building. In contrast to many commercial market actors, who very quickly lose any interest in unprofitable community work after occupancy, this is where the real work begins for Sozialbau.

It requires more than just any old housing estate, above all it demands well-thought-out design that is oriented towards people and their needs. The creation of community facilities is therefore of particularly great importance. Looking at residents' take-up, with 96% the connection to the community satellite antenna (SMAT) for television and radio programmes is clearly on top (currently an average of 103 television and 34 radio channels are provided to households without extra payment). But the additional opportunity for households independently to receive "exotic" channels or be able to establish direct access to a particular satellite via the fibre optic network is also important.

The second most used facilities, which are used for 82% of their possible operating time, are the 161 community laundry rooms, now mostly given the fancy name of Waschsalon (laundrette) – highly

frequented places where people meet, chat and exchange news. In addition, the children’s playrooms for bad weather are frequently located within sight, making it easier to use the laundries. These bring to mind the good old communication platform of the Bassena in Vienna’s 19th century Gründerzeit apartment houses. (Translator’s note: the Bassena was the water tap with basin, usually one located on each floor, where residents would go to fetch water and naturally meet up and talk with their neighbours: an urban equivalent of the “village pump”.) With regular use of 66 % in each case the more than sufficient 353 rooms for prams and pushchairs and the 166 rooms for bicycles on all the new housing estates show a high level of acceptance.

Communal facilities

Communal rooms and children’s playrooms	96	42–45 %		
Outdoor playgrounds	96	42–45 %		
Outdoor swimming pool	6	47 %		
Sauna and wellness area	21		32 %	
Fitness rooms	16		45 %	
Bicycle storage rooms	166	66 %		
Pram rooms	353	66 %		
Guest flats	6		78 %	
Laundry rooms	161		82 %	
- Washing machines		357		
- Driers		175		
- Ironing machines		136		
Communal satellite facilities	55			96 %
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Facilities</i>	<i>Acceptance</i>	<i>Use</i>
				<i>Connection quota</i>

The existence of 96 multifunctional communal and bad-weather play rooms, which can also be used for neighbourhood meetings, birthday parties and fun afternoons of play, is also of great importance for the promotion of social contact. They are a good supplement to the 96 open-air children’s playgrounds which cannot always be used due to the weather conditions in our part of the world. These facilities exist on every housing estate and are regularly used by 42 to 45 % of households.

Low-threshold meeting places find acceptance

Unfortunately the 6 outdoor swimming pools are few and far between. During the summer holidays they do not only teem with children and youngsters but plenty of adults can also be found cooling down and relaxing on hot days. They are important low-threshold meeting places and are used by 47 % of households. The few guest apartments which are available throughout the year for “short-stay” guests of

residents for a small payment are regularly used with an occupancy rate of up to 78 % of the theoretically possible time.

The 16 communal rooms for special requirements such as strength training, power workouts, yoga and gymnastics are also important with a rate of use of up to 45 % of the available time. The somewhat more frequently found 21 sauna and wellness areas which are used for 32 % of their operating time should also be mentioned. They are also places with uncomplicated access and the opportunity – if desired – to come into contact with other residents. In the management of such communal facilities it is also a matter of encouraging the self-organisation of residents and reacting flexibly to residents' new ideas for their use.

The dual nature of housing cooperatives

Besides moderate land and construction costs, without which affordable housing would be difficult to imagine, what is also needed is a building contractor for whom profit maximisation is not the be-all and end-all; who brings to their work a love of the job and the people. Limited-profit housing cooperatives offer the best preconditions because they are to the same extent business enterprises and communities in the social sense. On account of this “dual nature”¹⁵ they have long provided the most convincing results in the shaping of neighbourly relationships and furthermore have a far greater community building effect¹⁶ than all other forms of residential organisation.

Housing cooperatives are known for their affordable housing¹⁷ and guarantee a lifetime tenancy without a change of landlord. They are committed to speculation-free and consistent building and land ownership for the duration. Increases in property values do not pressurise housing cooperatives to increase their incomes or rents – which is always to the benefit of residents. And besides this a cooperative “together” has demonstrably always led to better results¹⁸ for the general public than a competitive “against each other”.¹⁹

In the same way as land, property basically also belongs to coming generations and as such should be and remain better committed to the generality. The supportive ownership of housing cooperatives correlates with this cross-generational quality. As much as individual, private ownership is to be welcomed (especially in the hands of workers), it should nevertheless not be forgotten that those people who can easily provide for themselves due to their income or financial circumstances

¹⁵⁾ Draheim, 1952, p. 16 ¹⁶⁾ Ludl, 2010, p. 15 ¹⁷⁾ Radakovics / Röschl, 2016, p. 16

¹⁸⁾ Ostrom, 1990, p. 58 ¹⁹⁾ Ludl, 3 / 2012, p. 6

and who in any case determine the price in the logic of supply and demand do not need assistance which drives prices still higher. The property crisis of 2008 – and not only in the USA²⁰ – is an example that should serve as a warning.

It would therefore be far more important to ensure that – if supported – it should only be sustainable owner-occupied property. The aim should be owner-occupation with the greatest possible social multiple use without the possibility of private enrichment.

Supported cooperative home ownership is to be preferred

Supported cooperative home ownership, which is typical for Austrian housing cooperatives, is to be preferred because it is private property²¹ which is nevertheless not open to the speculative disposition of individuals. It thus has the advantage of not being lost to the community through personal gain. As defined by Egon Matzner, supported cooperative ownership strengthens the autonomous sector and contributes to the benefit of society as a whole far beyond the circle of current beneficiaries.

The increase in expensive housing complexes, also under construction in Vienna (whether for individual home ownership or for rent), which attempt to create a kind of “affluent ghetto”, are strongly reminiscent of the gated communities²² which have long been widespread in the USA. Well-heeled apartment seekers are promised a life among their peers as in the sport or social enclaves of some elites – a development which should be opposed in the same way as support for individual flat ownership in multi-storey apartment buildings in urban areas. In place of solidarity this leads to a breakdown in solidarity in housing use and instead of a good mix which reflects the surrounding community, unhealthy segregation is facilitated.

“Making Heimat”

As pointedly shown at the exhibition in the German pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2016, it is always far more than a question of just a roof over one’s head. Strictly speaking it is a matter of “Making Heimat”,²³ which means creating a place where one has a sense of well-being and feels at home. Bringing this about undoubtedly requires much more attention and persistence than just facilitating residents first moving in so as to be honourably mentioned in the competition’s protocol.

Well thought out public and semi-public space which invites social interaction is of great importance for this feeling of homeliness. Life

20) Stiglitz, 2010, p. 78 21) Ludl, 2012, p. 199 22) Rifkin, 2000, p. 155

23) Schmal / Elser / Scheuermann, 2016, p. 13

together in society does not work in seclusion, there must of course also be an urban structural planning framework. Just as it is also always fundamentally a question of structure and not only urban design, of urbanity and not only appearance, in housing it is always about everyday integrative suitability and not only about the mantle. Unfortunately it is mostly questions of “taste” that are at the centre of public interest, as if the packaging were more important than the content. And even well-meaning contemporaries much prefer to judge external appearance rather than concentrating on the essentials.

Planners and their teachers would be well advised to concern themselves considerably more than has so far been common with the results of their work as regards content and the effects of housing construction on the integration into community life of the residents. With the architect partnership Scheifinger/Schindler/Szedenic, Sozialbau had a planning team for the “Interethnic Neighbourhood Housing Model” for whom future life on the housing estate was a great concern and who understood how to use the limited public space creatively for community-building down to the smallest detail. The idea of transforming the roof surfaces, which until then had always been neglected, into valuable meeting places rightly became a trademark and hallmark of excellence.

Use limited space for community-building down to the smallest detail

Today’s popular but over-simplistic size regulations for subsidised housing in Vienna do not explain why the residents of “Alt Erlaa” opposite the “Interethnic Neighbourhood Housing Model” are still well integrated and feel at home after 40 years²⁴ – this estate by far exceeds nearly all dimensions for subsidisable housing size.

In view of the urgent need for a large number of quickly-built, affordable apartments, a new commitment to high-quality, large-volume housing would be most desirable – this is the only way that the outstanding role of Vienna as the “residential city” with the best quality of life in Europe can also be assured for coming generations. What is more, it would be most advisable not only to cooperate with the owners of small plots of land but also with companies who are in the position and have the will to take on socio-spatial responsibility on a larger scale, as with the recent exemplary case of Seestadt Aspern.

Suitable housing provision

Fortunately here in Austria there is no doubt that the provision of the population with housing which takes account of our social, cultural and ecological standards requires continual governmental intervention.

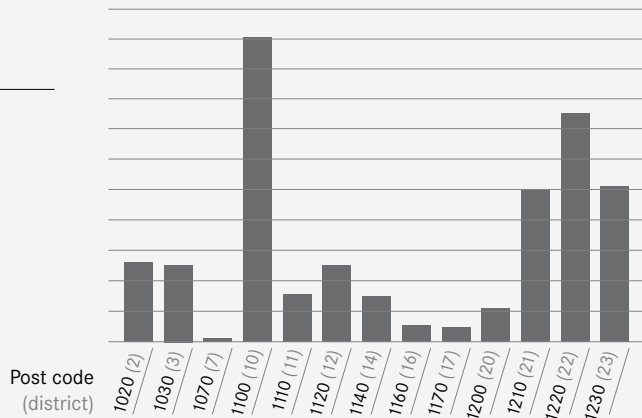
²⁴) AEAG, 2016, p. 12

An intervention that is also reasonable in view of the fundamental importance of housing as a public asset and the failure of key market-economy instruments. The Austrian Wohnbauförderungssystem²⁵ (direct public funding for housing) – the systematic, sustained and direct funding of housing construction – therefore takes on fundamental importance. This is the only way to satisfy the housing needs of the majority of the population who are not in the financial position to buy their own home or to pay market-oriented rather than cost-covering rents.²⁶ Fortunately, particularly in Vienna, there are a number of well-known figures in public life who promote this unique system on European level.

Sozialbau flats first occupied since 2000, whose new construction activity is limited to the area of the City of Vienna, are primarily located, in accordance with the availability of building land, in the districts of Favoriten (10th), Donaustadt (22nd), Liesing (23rd) and Floridsdorf (21st), followed by Meidling (12th), Leopoldstadt (2nd) and Landstrasse (3rd). It is noticeable that during the observation period Austrian residents were represented above average in Penzing (14th), Ottakring (16th) and Floridsdorf, foreign residents rather in Meidling, Favoriten and Simmering (11th).

Location of housing estates according to district

Housing units

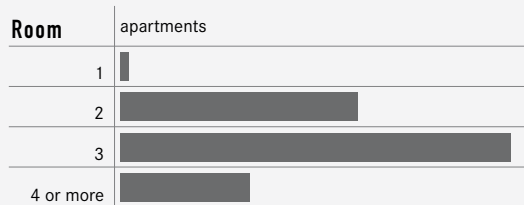


The 69 Sozialbau housing estates built since 2000 have an average of 121 flats. The sizes of the flats, an important precondition for a good mix of residents, range from 30.5 sqm to 144.9 sqm floor space. The proportion of three-room flats was 51.1 %, followed by 31.0 % of two-room flats and 16.9 % of flats with four or more rooms.

²⁵⁾ Ludl, 1998, p. 343 ²⁶⁾ Ludl, 1994, p.263

Sensibly, only in very rare exceptional cases are family-hostile, one-room flats built which are anyway available in sufficient quantity, mostly in substandard nineteenth-century apartment houses. If today there are some advocates of such a backward step in living standards, they turn a blind eye to the fact that new housing complexes must retain their quality far into the future. It must in any case be hoped that people's standards with regard to the quality of housing and life are not forced in the wrong direction such as back to the desperate housing situation of the Gründerzeit in the nineteenth century.

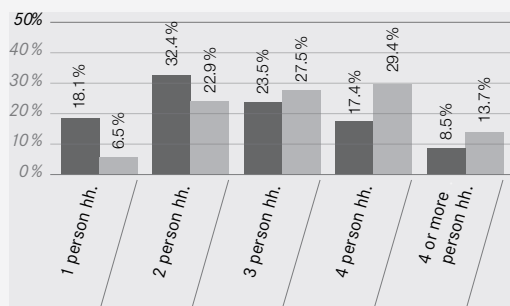
Room / apartments



Considerable differences in household size were found between Austrian and foreign tenants. Whereas 1 or 2 people were registered in roughly half (50.5 %) of the flats of tenants with Austrian citizenship, the figure for 1 or 2 person households with foreign citizens was only 29.4 %. A completely different picture emerged for flats with 3 or 4 residents: 40.9 % of tenants with Austrian citizenship and 56.9 % with foreign citizenship.

Household size according to nationalities

People per household as a percentage



It fits the picture that an average of 51 children and young people live in each housing complex. Out of the 3,556 children and youngsters on first occupancy, Austrian households had 0.4 children per flat,

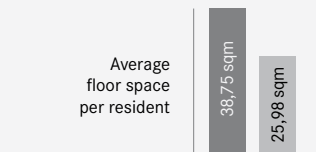
i.e. one child per 2.5 flats, whereas foreign households had an average of 0.6 children per flat or 1 child per 1.7 flats.

Looking at flat size in relation to the number of residents it was shown that on moving in there was an average floor space of 35.8 sqm per person (the Vienna average is 38 sqm floor space per person). Austrian households had an average floor space of 39 sqm per person while foreign households had only 26 sqm. This difference is explained by the larger number of residents in the flats of tenants with foreign citizenship.

Floor space

per resident Ø 35,81 sqm

- without Austrian citizenship
- with Austrian citizenship



Affordable housing is crucial

The apartment buildings constructed by Sozialbau during the observation period do not only hold to the basic principle of subsidised housing. Beyond this, when one thinks of the low equity, they are particularly low-priced, whereby the “affordability” that is often evoked in the housing policy discussion is not restricted to a minority of flats on a housing estate, which must then be used as a fig leaf for “social commitment”, but applies to all the housing provision without exception.

Affordable housing is truly indispensable, because it is not just a question of migrants but of a good social mix. The very desirable interest of flat-seeking Austrians who already live in orderly circumstances can best be served by excellent housing quality and a good cost-benefit ratio.

A trademark of the Sozialbau has always been that a high-ranking civil servant can live well next door to a cleaning woman and neither have a problem with it – and so should it also remain.

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