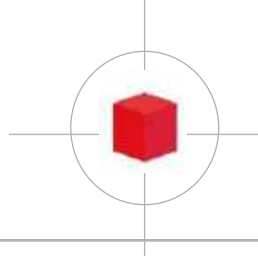


# Strategies for Further Development of Large Housing Estates: Case of Germany

**Dr. Bernd Hunger**  
**Chairman of Center of Competence for Major Housing Estates**  
*Kompetenzzentrum Großsiedlungen e.V.*

*International Workshop: Strategies for Large Housing Estates,  
6-7<sup>th</sup> July 2023*



## Center of Competence for Major Housing Estates: Members of the Centre of Competence – a competent network

Housing companies  
and cooperatives

Municipalities

Associations  
of housing and  
construction industry

Architects  
Urban planners  
Engineers

Business companies

Associations

Individuals

Redevelopment  
agencies



## 1 Review and Background

- What initial characteristics of large housing estates are relevant for future development?

## 2 Urban Planning and Construction Dimension

- In what way the existing infrastructure can be transformed to withstand future challenges?
- What are the opportunities and limitations for additional construction development within the existing urban fabric?

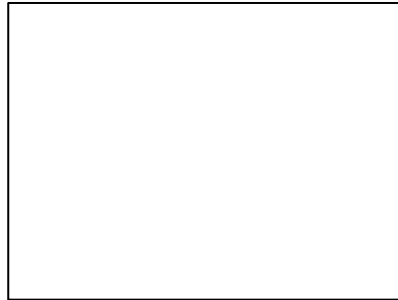
## 3 Social Dimension

- How can housing distribution policy (“Belegungspolitik”) influence social segregation dynamic?
- Which forms of partnership have proven to be successful in community work?

## Stereotypes about Large Housing Estates



“Monotonous  
and inhospitable”



“Only the poor live  
here”



Little to no values of  
living environment



Absent or insufficient  
infrastructure



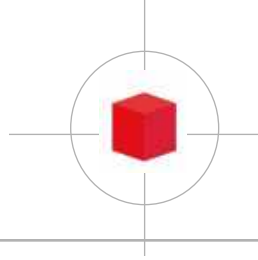
“All residents are  
on the right”

# ***Our Motto: Large Housing Estates are Homes***

Residents and critics assess established living environment diametrically opposite.



Photos by Dagmar Weidemüller.



# What are “Large (Major) Housing Estates”?

**Large (major) housing estates:**

- Are relatively uniform in construction (so-called ‘ensemble effect’).
- Predominantly characterized by rental housing construction.
- Group of housing estates is considered ‘large’ starting from approx. 500 residential units or 1,000 inhabitants.



**Neues Bauen movement, Garden city movement, Reform-siedlungen modernism, 1920s – 1930s**



**Rebuilding of German cities: structured and decentralized city 1950s – 1960s**



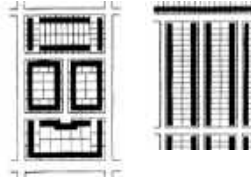
**‘Urbanity through Density’, West Germany (‘Urbanität durch Dichte’) mid. 1960s – 1980s**



**Complex residential construction, East Germany 1970s – 1980s**

# Diverse Typology of Large Housing Estates 1920s – 1980s

Housing estates  
of 1920-30s

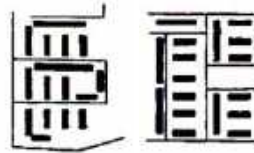


Cologne, Germaniasiedlung



Cologne, Blauer Hof

Housing estates  
of 1950-60s



Lörrach, Teichmattensiedlung



Housing estates  
of 1970s (West)



Berlin, Mellerbogen



Berlin, Hofgarten

Housing estates  
of 1970-80s  
(Complex residential  
construction East)

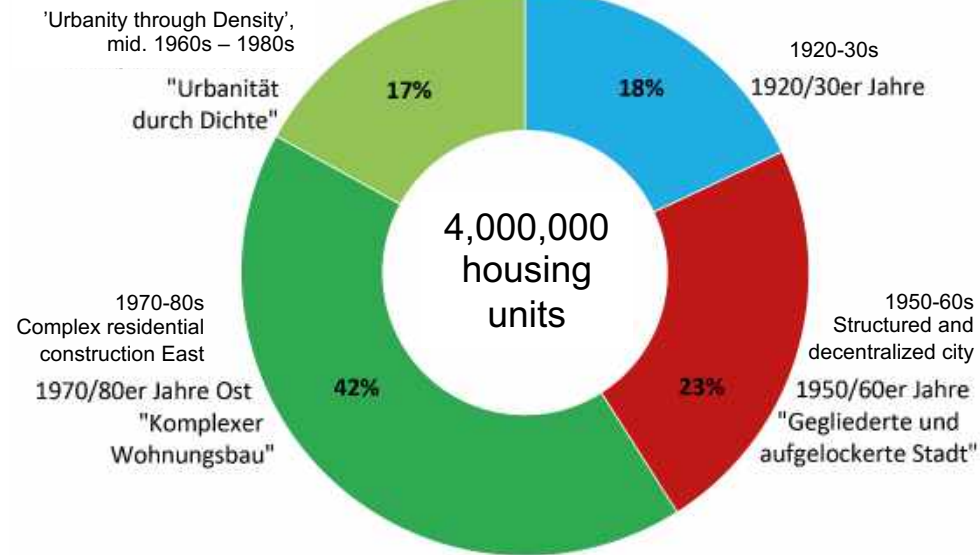
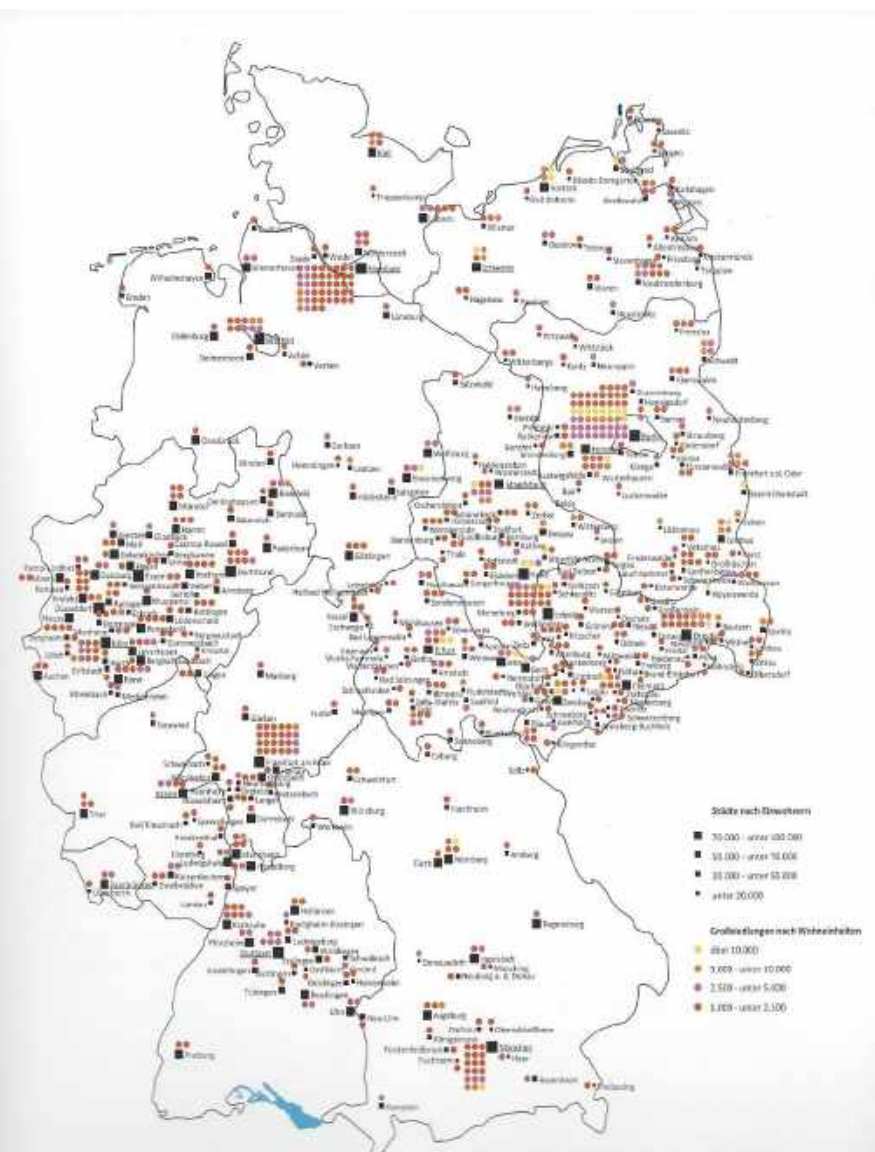
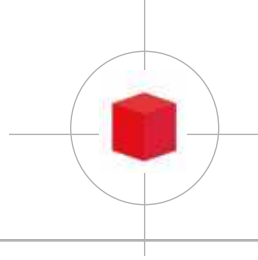


Leipzig Grünau



Berlin, Hellersdorf

Photos: Archive Kompetenzzentrum Großsiedlungen.



- Position on housing market:**
- 39,5M residential units (2011 Census).
  - out of which 20,6M are rental apartments.
  - 20% of total housing stock is a share of large housing estates.
  - approx. 8,0M residents.

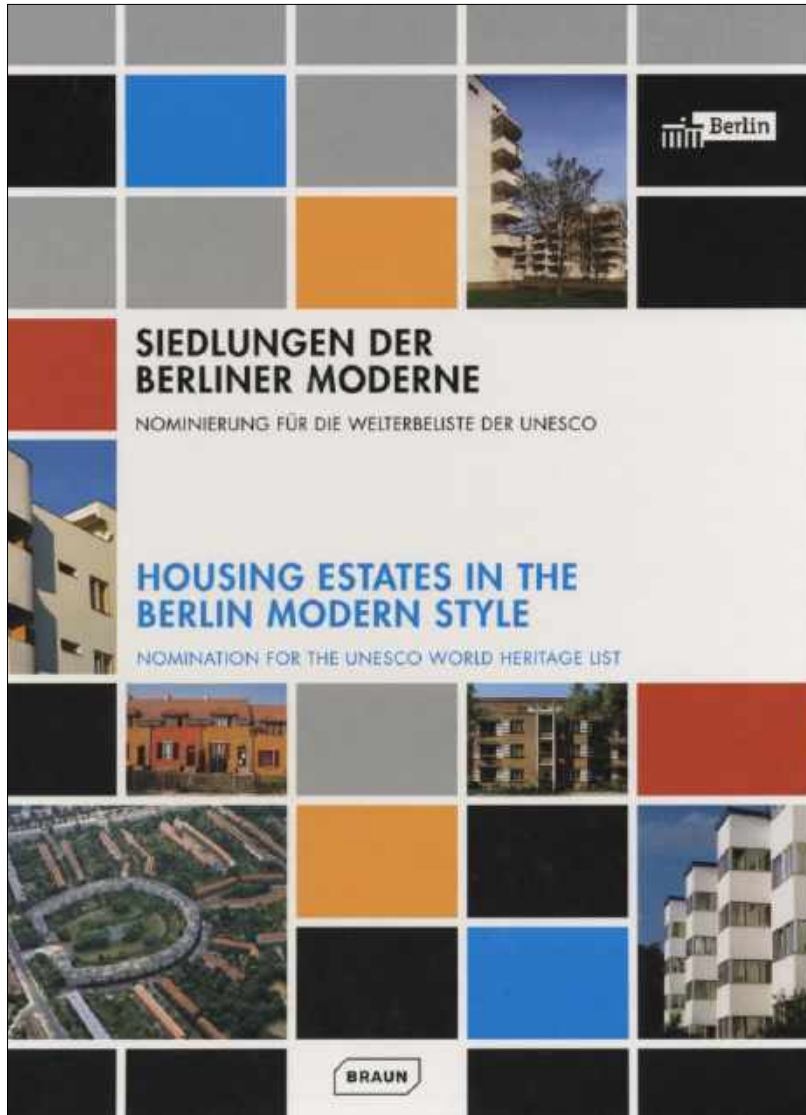


## Criticism of XIX Century Housing Construction

“Berliner Mietshaus”, the size of the backyard corresponds to the turning radius of a fire brigade ladder



# A new form of living environment becomes World Heritage



Book Cover: Siedlungen der Berliner Moderne, 2009

# Construction of housing estates in the 1920 – 1930s



Berlin, Hufeisensiedlung



Berlin, Weiße Stadt

## Special features:

- Light, air and sunshine.
- Open urban landscape, contradiction to the historic city morphology.
- Separation of living and working spaces.
- public amenities and services.
- stock of rental housing provided through housing cooperatives and public housing companies to a wide range of social groups.
- Appropriate scale and high design quality of the built environment.

# Construction of housing estates in the 1950 – 1960s



Bremen, 'Neue Vahr' housing estate  
(GEWOBA Bremen)



Lübbenau  
(WIS Wohnungsbaugesellschaft im Spreewald, Lübbenau)

## 'Decentralized Urban Landscape'

### Special features:

- Free-standing residential clusters in open green areas.
- Most of the residential areas are well-equipped with public amenities.
- Car-oriented city.
- Impressive construction achievement: Overcoming housing shortages, a precondition for urban renewal the historical inner city districts

# Construction of housing estates in the 1970 – 1980s

## ‘Urbanity through Density’ in the West and ‘Complex residential construction’ in the East



Bremen, Osterholz-Tenever

### Special features:

- Industrial construction and complex planning.
- Green spaces and a center system as the fundamental framework for urban structure.



Cottbus, Quartier Turower Straße

(Photos: Archive Kompetenzzentrum Großsiedlungen)

## What were the social and cultural prerequisites for the design of large housing estates?

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- Housing estates were built for neighborhood relatively homogeneous from cultural and social stand points:
  - Guiding principle: social equality in provision of living environment.
  - no parcels or individual land plots, open spaces instead of privately enclosed spaces.
  - no differentiation between main and back facades.
- Promises of emancipation: housing for a wide range of population; education and career opportunities for all.
- Reminder of bomb war: ‘never again’ creating of narrow streets.
- High level of **mutual trust** is a prerequisite for the functioning “open urban landscape”.

**Current challenges within large housing estates are not a ‘planning mistake’, however, changed social conditions are the cause of the status quo.**

## Structure of the Report

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### 2 Urban Planning and Construction Dimension

- In what way the existing infrastructure can be transformed to withstand future challenges?
- What are the opportunities and limitations for additional construction development within the existing urban fabric?

# Renewal of the existing housing stock



50 JAHRE  
WOHNUNGSBAUSERIE WBS 70

DOKUMENTATION AUSGEWÄHLTER BEISPIELE



VIelfältiger Wandel durch Weiterentwicklung

Documentation of examples for the conversion of the housing series WBS 70  
In the former German Democratic Republic



# Large Housing Estate Neubrandenburg Oststadt, Robert-Koch-Straße

Neubrandenburger Wohnungsgesellschaft mbH (NEUWOGES)

Kompetenz-  
zentrum  
Groß-  
siedlungen e.V.



Fotos zum Projekt © NEUWOGES

# Large Housing Estate Neubrandenburg Oststadt, Robert-Koch-Straße

Neubrandenburger Wohnungsgesellschaft mbH (NEUWOGES)



Städtebauliche Einordnung



Neugestaltung der Freiflächen



Umbau der Erdgeschosszone

Fotos: NEUWOGES

## Complex modernization of nine-story apartment buildings

### *Overview of the solutions*

- Improvement of living spaces via redesigning floor plans.
- Renovation of plumbing, ventilation, and electrical systems.
- Roof reconstruction as well as insulation of basement ceilings.
- Setting up bicycle storage rooms on the ground floor.
- Barrier-free entrance via creating of a ramp system.
- Facade and balcony renovation, including new color scheme.
- Redesign of the outdoor facilities.

# Large Housing Estate Greifswald, Ostseeviertel, Gedserring / Rigaer Straße

Wohnungsbau- und Verwaltungsgesellschaft mbH Greifswald (WVG mbH)



# Large Housing Estate Greifswald, Ostseeviiertel, Gedserring / Rigaer Straße

Wohnungsbau- und Verwaltungsgesellschaft mbH Greifswald (WVG mbH)



Jan Bitter Fotografie



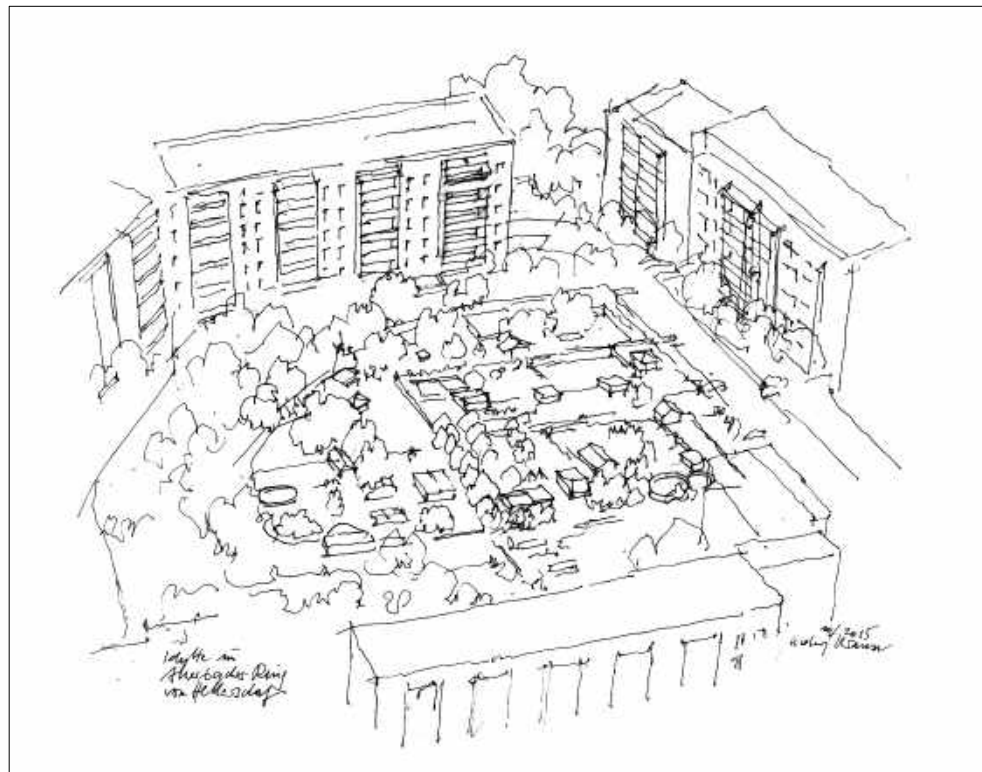
Jan Bitter Fotografie



## Complex transformation of quarters

- Selective demolition of residential blocks.
- Measures for energy efficiency, e.g., insulation of facades.
- Differentiation of the housing stock through floor plan changes.
- Installation of elevators.
- Creation of apartments for seniors; apartments suitable for assisted living with nursing services.
- Redesign of living environment.

# Green space - Crucial for Residents' Satisfaction with Housing and for Climate Adaptability



Berlin - Hellersdorf:  
Tenants' Gardens in a Residential  
Courtyard

# Thuringia: The Projects for "WBS 70" Brochure



Rudolstadt

A. Kranert



Arnstadt

vtw



Gera, Eiselstraße

vtw



Jena, Smartes Quartier

© grafiker.org



Saalfeld/Saale, Rainweg

vtw



Sondershausen

Deutscher Bauherrenpreis

# Lessons for the Second Cycle of Modernization

## Principles for Renewal

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**From individual buildings to the quarter as a whole**

**Greater variety of housing options, both in terms of quality and price**

**Unity of living and built environments**

**Integration of renovation with services and support**

**Sufficient additional space:** The rise of electromobility has led to new demands for parking spaces and storage facilities for e-bikes. In areas undergoing renovation, solutions are also sought to address the lack of insufficient storage space.

# BAUEN IN NACHBARSCHAFTEN



ERGÄNZENDER WOHNUNGSBAU IN GROSSEN  
WOHNSIEDLUNGEN UND STADTQUARTIEREN

## New construction within the existing housing stock

- Building within the existing stock vs. preserving and expanding the open space system: Is a new view necessary due to the pandemic and climate change?
- How can acceptance be fostered among the existing neighborhoods?



# 1. Expansion and Renewal of Existing Housing Stock

## Potsdam-Schlaatz Potsdamer Wohnungsgenossenschaft 1956



Dirk Laubner



PWG 1956 eG



B. Rechenbach

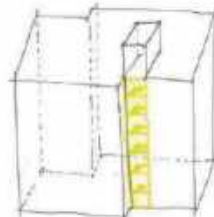
- The WBS 70 cube house was extended by two floors. The foundation had to be reinforced as lightweight frame construction was not approved.
- Almost all construction measures were carried out while the building remained occupied. The basis for a smooth renovation process was early discussions and cooperative collaboration.



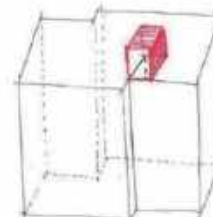
Abbruch Drempel  
Öffnung Decke Treppenhaus (TH)



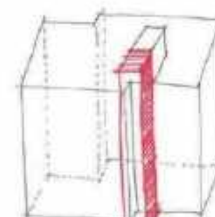
Notdach Bitumen, geschweißt



Abbruch Außenwand  
Abbruch TH



TH-Erweiterung um zwei Geschosse



Neuer Aufzugschacht  
Neue Treppen und Podeste



Aufstockung um zwei Geschosse



### 3. Detached Built-in

#### Bremer Punkt - GEWOBA



Image Source: Gewoba Bremen



Nikolai Wolff

- Barrier-free, flexible housing - adaptable and diverse geometric design.
- A new “building layer” is created without undermining the existing stock.
- The offering is primarily targeted towards the existing neighborhoods.
- Fast construction using prefabrication methods, minimal impact on the surroundings.



## Verkannte Großwohnsiedlungen

Dichte ist nicht alles. Große Siedlungen sind Quartiere in mancher Hinsicht überlegen. Nicht nur mit Blick auf den Klimawandel.

Ein Gastbeitrag von Bernd Hunger

Dichtes Leben in der Stadt ist angeht. Manchmal gelingt es beispielhaft und bereichert den Stadtraum, manchmal ist es zu eng, monoton und renditegetrieben. Man reizt sich die Augen, dass Verfechter dichten Bauens, wie Christoph Mäcker in einem Artikel vom 30. Mai in dieser Zeitung, unterschätzen die Abstände gelassen. Die Corona-Pandemie als Argument für eine höhere städtebauliche Dichte benehmen. Andere Fachleute sehen die Pandemie eher als Anlass, über die Kronfestigkeit der Stadtstrukturen und Wohnverhältnisse nachzudenken.

Die Altbauquartiere haben genau die gleiche aus der Erfahrung zweier Weltkriege- und katastrophaler Wohnverhältnisse heraus. Die niedrige Dichte der bewohnten Siedlungen der späten Jahre war keine Platzverschwendung, sondern hatte ihre Ursache in den notwendigen Gartengrößen, die für die eventuell notwendige Selbstversorgung reichten. Die Grünfähigkeit der Freizeite war ebenso wie die räumliche Trennung des Wohnens von den Arbeitsstätten eine Reaktion auf die hygienischen Zustände in den Gründerzeitalquartieren und Altbauhöfen. Licht, Luft und Sonne waren gefragt.

Auch den Planern der nach den Prinzipien der modernistischen Stadtentwicklung



Licht, Luft und viel Grün: Die großen Wohnsiedlungen sind oftmals beliebter, als ihr Ruf vermuten lässt.

Foto: Dapag/Waldemar

für den Aufenthalt an Grün. Und eben auch für die Kronfestigkeit, für die Resilienz und Flexibilität der Stadtstruktur. Aber nicht nur außen, auch im Geländeinneren prallen Klimawandel und Wohnqualität zuweilen widersprüchlich aufeinander. Die heutigen Wohnhäuser werden immer tiefer und kompakter gebaut, um Energie zu sparen. Die Konsequenz ist, dass die Wohnungen häufig nur „über Eck“ nach benachteiligten Himmelsrichtungen oder gar nur einseitig angeordnet sind. Bäder sind komfortabel ausgestattet, liegen aber in der Regel im fenster-

loser Familien mit Kindern an andererwo. Hier wächst die Zukunft der Stadt heran. Eine Wohnform bewacht aus dem Leitbild der europäischen Stadt auszukommen ist allen schon angesichts ihrer quantitativen Bedeutung seitens: In den Großsiedlungen leben etwa acht Millionen Haushalte in zwanzig Prozent des Mietwohnungsbestandes der Bundesrepublik. In den Großstädten ist ihr Anteil deutlich höher, in Berlin zum Beispiel lebt jeder Zweite in einer zwischen 1920 und 1980 gebauten Wohnsiedlung. Ihr Bau hat die Wohnsmut überwunden

Stellplätze und eingeschossige beladene Einkaufszentren innerhalb der Wohnmenschens sind, mit dem Blick der Residenten betrachtet, nicht untergenutzte Un-Räume, sondern Flächenpotentiale, deren zukünftiger Nutzen noch ungewiss ist. Sie sind in der Regel gestalterisch unbefriedigend, aber man kann sie nur einmal vielgeschossig bebauen.

Wenn die Gründerzeitbebauung so gefragt wäre, wie sie von den Jüngeren

der Dichte propagiert wird, dann würden ganze Viertel so gebaut werden. Die Umfragen zu den Wohnbedürfnissen zeigen aber: Menschen wollen ruhig und im Grünen wohnen. Ein gepflegtes Wohnumfeld für den ungenutzten Aufenthalt im Freien und eine sichere Nachbarschaft spielen eine große Rolle. Erst wenn diese Bedürfnisse befriedigt sind, quasi als Zusatz, suchen sie die lebendige Stadtkultur, die aber nicht unbedingt direkt vorm Haus

sein muss. Jeder weiß das, der Kinder hat oder schon älter ist. Gefragt werden auch zukünftig durchgrünte Stadtlandschaften sein, in denen Wohnqualität, Erholungswert und Flexibilität für zukünftige Ansprüche – seien es Krisen oder neue Nutzungen – zusammenspielen.

Der Autor ist Stadtplaner und Stadtsoziologe in Berlin und leitet das „Kompetenzzentrum Großsiedlungen e.V.“, das sich als bundesweites Netzwerk für die Belange der Großsiedlungen ansetzt.

The COVID-19 pandemic and climate change are pushing a new way of thinking:

- On the balance between open spaces and built environment.
- On resilient spatial structures.
- On the limitations of densification.

The balance between compact development and open spaces typical for large housing estates meets the demands of climate change.

# Large Housing Estates have Promising Urban Planning Potential.....

- Climate Protection: High potential for energy efficiency (compact construction, centralized supply of primary energy). Green spaces and low sealing are advantages in climate change.
- Construction: Serial construction methods open up a possibility for efficient renovation and the provision of new qualities.
- Infrastructure: facilities are adaptable to social and demographic changes.
- Neighborhood context (Quartiersbezug): Coordinated action between municipalities and housing companies within existing neighborhoods is easier than in structures with fragmented ownership structure

**Planning pre-condition: Integrated neighborhood concepts.**

## ...but the estates face significant social challenges

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- Neighborhood: Large housing estates house a larger share of households
  - with low-income;
  - with migration background;
  - with social benefits (under SGBII)than other city neighborhoods.
- Government support: they relieve other districts of social integration tasks and therefore need state support
- Social Cohesion: Large housing estates are not the cause of social conflicts but more likely to become hotspots for social conflicts than other neighborhoods. Social cohesion within the neighborhoods therefore requires special attention

## The rapidity of socio-structural changes requires proactive actions

- not only already disadvantaged residential areas require further support, but also currently stable neighborhoods require preventative interventions.
- In disadvantaged neighborhoods, the following services are severely contested:
  - available housing.
  - provision of healthcare services.
  - availability of childcare and school placements.

## Housing Distribution Policy to strengthen the social mix

- Create balance between housing provision for
  - a wide range of households with different incomes and social status (“breite Schichten”)
  - disadvantaged households.
  
- Take into account the capacity of existing neighborhoods in the allocation of housing:
  - allowing flexibility in housing distribution quotas to address social cohesion within neighborhoods.
  
  - implementing upper limits of housing distribution quotas for neighborhoods that are clearly overwhelmed. (controversially discussed in Germany)



## Social Cohesion and Integration: Key Success factors

- Sensitive housing distribution policy with flexibility in housing allocation for housing companies.
- Collaboration between public and private actors – neighborhood management and social management departments.
- Intensive and individualized support, including case-specific engagement.
- Special attention to education and care for children and adolescents.

*Example:* Facade art in the High-Deck housing estate with social value. Local youth were trained as painters and decorators. Project by “Stadt und Land” housing company.



# Education as a Key to Facilitating Integration

*Example:* Educational network by housing company degewo



- Was founded in 2007 by the union of 14 schools of Gropiusstadt large housing estate.
- Collaborates with kindergartens and youth centers.
- **Common goal:** Improvement of the educational opportunities.



## Example: Schools create tile murals in the neighborhood

- Damaged and dirty walls were restored with tiles painted by children.
- The first tile mural was created five years ago in passage between buildings. It remains graffiti-free. The 12-meter-long surface depicts colorful high-rise buildings.
- Since then, several follow-up projects have been carried out.
- **Murals became a trademark of degewo's neighborhood of Gropiusstadt!**



Fotos: degewo

# Network of Housing companies creates Neighborhood Management in Dortmund Scharnhorst Ost



**DOGEWO**21

**LEG**

Ideen  
Menschen  
Immobilien



Spar- und Bauverein eG  
Dortmund seit 1893

# Cooperation of several housing companies in one neighborhood



Upgrading and image improvement in the neighborhood; Planting activities with children.

Playground planning, photo safari, hallway design with children, intercultural picnics, planting campaigns, neighborhood help, energy-saving parties, photo competitions, ...



Children's play projects take place weekly in four districts.

Fotos: Kooperationsgemeinschaft Dortmund Scharnhorst Ost

Werden Sie  
**PATIN** oder  
**PATE** für den  
**SPIELPLATZ**  
in Ihrer Nachbarschaft

Dortmund Scharnhorst-Ost

LEG DOGEWO 21

# Further development of large housing estates: Challenges at a glance

## Political Perspective

- Special political attention and financial support to districts that make a particularly high contribution to social cohesion of the city as a whole.

## Urban Planning Perspective

- Modernization and diversification of the housing stock.
- Infill development with modernization of the existing housing stock.
- Design of the living environment adaptable to climate change.
- Sufficient and high-quality social infrastructure.
- Preparation for new forms of mobility.

## Social Perspective

- Sensible housing distribution policy.
- Diverse neighborhood work as a community task.
- Education, education, education: the best kindergartens and schools in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

# Center of Competence for Major Housing Estates

Kompetenz-  
zentrum  
Groß-  
siedlungen e.V.



**22** YEARS 2001-2023

Thank you!



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