

Herbert Ludl (Ed.)

# INTEGRATION IN HOUSING

MODELS FOR  
SOCIAL COHESION



SOZIALBAU AG

Cover photo:  
Focus on building residential communities -  
the symbol for 60 years of Sozialbau  
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*I somehow  
arrived in Vienna  
Photo: VOGUS*



## Preface

This book partly reproduces the original German-language version “Integration im Wohnbau – Modelle für ein soziales Zusammenleben”, published by Verlag Birkhäuser in 2017. Although increasing migration occurred, particularly from 2015, during the period of this study, it is in no way concerned with the acute housing policy measures taken at the time but focuses on the matter of “integration” – a process that is seen as long-term, detailed and continuous.

This English edition analyses examples of the opportunities for effective action of the limited-profit, cooperatively-organised, Vienna group of companies (Sozialbau AG) from various perspectives.

The original version in German contains articles expanding on the theme by August Gächter (Housing in Urban Transition – Changes in social homogeneity in Vienna), Margrit Hugentobler/Marie Glaser (CH / Housing Integration in Zurich – Approaches, measures and exemplary projects) and Wolfgang Förster (Special Circumstances and/or Everyday Occurrence – What housing design can contribute to integration).

Short abstracts – see page 143.



German edition

Herbert Ludl (Hrsg.)

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# Supporting Integrative Processes

HERBERT LUDL

The home as the  
most important social setting

Who is not aware of those densely populated quarters in Europe's big cities<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> Or is this just making a virtue of necessity?

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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”<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> The requisite behavioural modifications can and should not only be prompted by “higher powers”. Here “civil society”<sup>5</sup> has work to do, in this case the residents of housing estates as “verantwortlich handelnde Subjekte” (people who behave responsibly),<sup>6</sup> 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. Akrami<sup>7</sup> 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

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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”<sup>8</sup> 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 principles<sup>9</sup> 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

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<sup>8</sup>) Ludl, 2003, p. 11    <sup>9</sup>) 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.<sup>10</sup> 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,<sup>11</sup> 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 learned<sup>12</sup> and it is apparent that social contact with neighbours<sup>13</sup> can be a remedy for xenophobia that is just as simple as it is effective.<sup>14</sup>

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

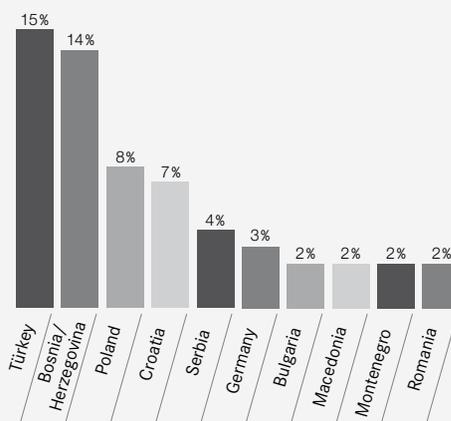
<sup>12)</sup> Ludl, 2001, p. 23 <sup>13)</sup> Kohlbacher / Reeger, 2000, p. 124 <sup>14)</sup> Kallmeyer, 2002, p. 155

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 %.

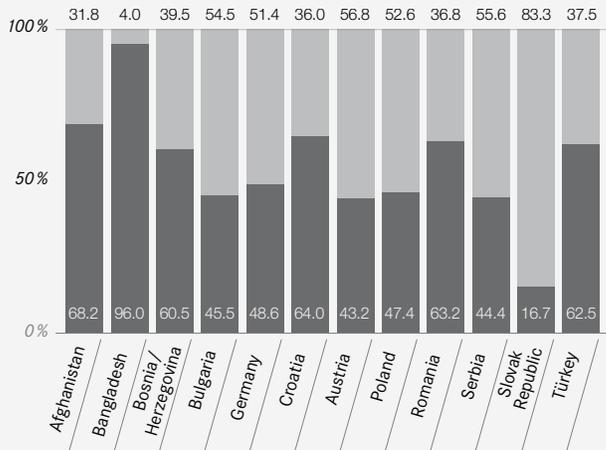
35 % of foreign main tenants came from EU countries and 51 % from European non-EU countries, whereby Turkey was counted as European.

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

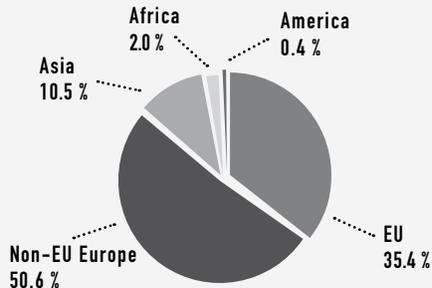
according to nationality as a percentage

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.

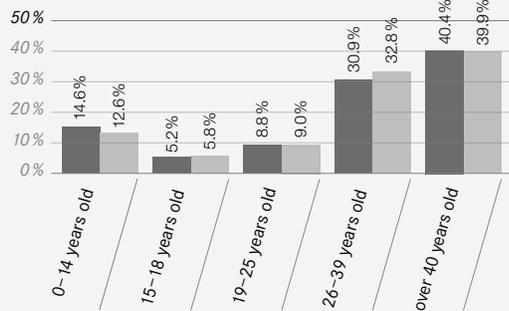
Also interesting in our survey was the extent to which our target group used the many channels open to contact Sozialbau, which are used by more than 700 residents per day (whereby each household in the Sozialbau group uses them three times per year on average). In fact, during our observation period 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”<sup>15</sup> they have long provided the most convincing results in the shaping of neighbourly relationships and furthermore have a far greater community building effect<sup>16</sup> than all other forms of residential organisation.

Housing cooperatives are known for their affordable housing<sup>17</sup> 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 results<sup>18</sup> for the general public than a competitive “against each other”.<sup>19</sup>

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

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

<sup>18)</sup> Ostrom, 1990, p. 58   <sup>19)</sup> 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 USA<sup>20</sup> – 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 property<sup>21</sup> 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 communities<sup>22</sup> 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”,<sup>23</sup> 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

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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 years<sup>24</sup> – 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.

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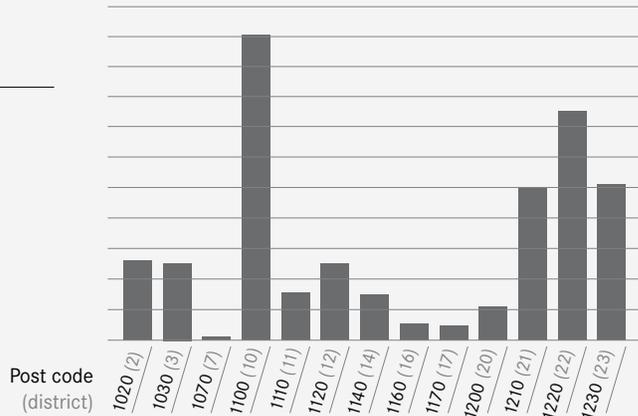
<sup>24</sup>) AEAG, 2016, p. 12

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 Wohnbauförderungssystem<sup>25</sup> (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.<sup>26</sup> 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

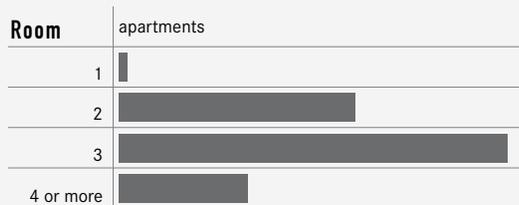


The 69 Sozialbau housing estates built since 2000 have an average of 121 flats. The sizes of the flats, an important precondition for a good mix of residents, range from 30.5 sqm to 144.9 sqm floor space. The proportion of three-room flats was 51.1 %, followed by 31.0 % of two-room flats and 16.9 % of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

<sup>25</sup>) Ludl, 1998, p. 343 <sup>26</sup>) 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

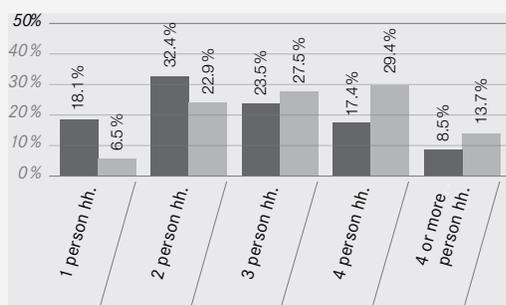


Considerable differences in household size were found between Austrian and foreign tenants. Whereas 1 or 2 people were registered in roughly half (50.5 %) of the flats of tenants with Austrian citizenship, the figure for 1 or 2 person households with foreign citizens was only 29.4 %. A completely different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

without Austrian citizenship  
 with Austrian citizenship



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,

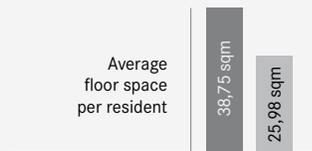
i.e. one child per 2.5 flats, whereas foreign households had an average of 0.6 children per flat or 1 child per 1.7 flats.

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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# Current Relevance of an Initial Project

JOACHIM BRECH / HEIDRUN FEIGELFELD

Integration in the Interethnic Neighbourhood Housing Model

The question of how people from different cultures can live together as good neighbours is always present in the planning of new housing estates and in the letting and administration of housing. Besides their “everyday business” some companies repeatedly try to gain new insights with innovative projects, because the new challenges we continually face cannot be met with “it’s always been like this” and “that’s what we’ve always done”.

One such innovative integration project that has now been operating for many years is the “Interethnische Nachbarschaft” (“Interethnic Neighbourhood”) – also known as “Globaler Hof” (“Global Estate”) – run by Sozialbau in Vienna. The housing estate, that was ready for occupancy in 2000, was to have a proportion of Austrians to migrants of 50-50, with many ethnicities represented among the migrants. Sozialbau wanted to provide the structural framework as well as the social framework – highly qualified housing support. In a 2003 survey, three years after occupancy, 48% of the 140 households were in fact “nonnationalised migrants”, thus migrants (still) without Austrian citizenship.

This detailed 2003 evaluation allowed Sozialbau to establish whether the Globaler Hof had achieved successful integration of migrants and ultimately also of Austrians into an open, tolerant, urban community. The study investigated in great detail how and under what conditions integration was possible on this housing estate, and as it turned out it was quite successful. Since then the housing complex has again and again been used as a reference for successful integration, also beyond Vienna. The Municipality of Vienna awarded the project the first Wiener Wohnbaupreis (Vienna Housing Prize) in 2009.

This new study, which is, however, not so comprehensive, is intended to examine whether this housing model has also still proved itself after more than fifteen years, not least under the impact of the virulent new integration challenges since 2015 on account of massive migration.

Based on a survey of residents, the caretaker and the housing management company, this study can give an impression of the

*Integration  
in an open,  
tolerant urban  
community*

## Globaler Hof data

Location	Anton-Baumgartner-Straße 127-129, Vienna, 23rd District
Architect	Arch. DI Peter Scheifinger, Vienna
Building	140 subsidised apartments incl. caretaker's flat
	Size of flats: 44 to 108 sqm
	Housing costs: Gross cold rent per sqm: 7.53 EUR
	Mix: - 8 1-room - 61 2-room - 24 3-room - 46 4-room
	7 shops etc.: café, pizzeria, sport, hairdresser, chiropract, gallery, kindergarten
	1 large communal room with kitchen, WC etc.: 312 sqm
	4 communal rooms on the roof: together 120 sqm
	4 communal closed loggias with around 180 sqm
	Children's play room: 51sqm
	Storerooms: 318 sqm
	Wellness: 209 sqm
	Laundry: 45 sqm
	Effective surface for funding: 10,860 sqm
	Communal area: 1,236 sqm
Basement car park with 146 spaces, 102 of them rented	
Status	First occupancy: June 2000
	132 flats rented (January 2016)
	New tenancies since first occupancy, as of January 2016: 91 (including passed-on tenancies)
TV system	- Number of stations: 117 - Number of foreign stations (incl. Germany): 95 - Every flat connected to the central receiver
Residents' organisation	Verein Miteinander e.V. (registered association)

Sozialbau can give no information about the number of residents, forms of household or ethnic origin.

situation. It should be emphasised that this is not a representative investigation. It is based on qualitative interviews with residents in various life situations but provides an impression and view of opinions which on the whole reflect reality. The interviews did not suggest that the (not interviewed) majority of residents would have answered very differently from the interviewees. The quoted statements go to make up a plausible picture and reflect sentiments at the Globaler Hof. Generalisations can therefore certainly be made.

*Statements  
paint a plausible  
picture*

The question was whether the earlier model has also proved its qualities over a longer period of time or could adapt and whether it can still provide a meaningful answer to changed situations and needs. It would be desirable in itself if the “model” had become a “normal case among many” and “inter-ethnic housing” a successful everyday fact of life.

## **Changes in conflict culture**

Against the background of current developments, as outlined above, residents from six households from the Globaler Hof were interviewed following guidelines. (Anonymity was assured. In order to preserve it no information is provided about social status or origin except for migrant/Austrian.) Residents were selected:

- ▶ who had lived at the Globaler Hof for several years or since the beginning,
- ▶ who had only lived at the Globaler Hof for around one year,

including:

- ▶ family, first generation migrants, at Globaler Hof from the beginning,
- ▶ family, first generation migrants, four children, at Globaler Hof for three years,
- ▶ Austrian woman pensioner living alone, at Globaler Hof from the beginning,
- ▶ a small family, parents and small child, international mixed origin, at Globaler Hof for three years,
- ▶ resident, young, second generation migrant, living alone, at Globaler Hof since the beginning,
- ▶ Austrian family, elderly couple, with adult daughter in her own flat.

Others interviewed apart from residents:

- ▶ the caretaker, Ahmadschah Akrami, migrant from Afghanistan,
- ▶ the Sozialbau staff member responsible for the management of the estate.

The interviews with residents took place in their apartments. The caretaker and the Sozialbau staff member were interviewed on the telephone.

## The topics

### ① Identification with the idea

In “regular housing” apartment-seekers look for an adequately-sized, affordable flat in a district that suits them. People look for and need a flat and not a housing concept. In contrast to the building associations, for example, for Globaler Hof residents - with a few exceptions - an idea or a concept such as community living, intercultural housing or living without a car etc. was not at first important, or in any case not a reason to decide for a flat in this housing complex. (Many also knew nothing about the concept.) As a rule such programmatic projects are directed towards a defined social milieu. The narrow concept serves to limit the milieu and isolate or exclude it. However, as shown in this case, identification with a central idea can also come about in normal housing if housing companies provide a suitable framework and the idea is not too narrowly formulated.

*Identification with a central idea through a suitable framework*

The first survey (2002, after a very short period of residency) found that most of the apartment seekers applied for a flat at the Globaler Hof because they needed accommodation (“First, of course, the flat - and the balcony”) and what was on offer - location, layout of the flats, quality (“presentable”) and price (“I’ve looked around, a lot higher, a lot the same”) - suited their requirements and possibilities. Sozialbau’s “50-50” idea, which was not at all highlighted in talks with possible tenants and sometimes not even mentioned, was nevertheless an inducement for some people to want to move there. But it was more or less incidental for most if they did not have a negative attitude to the idea. In fact, people could not imagine what it would mean for everyday life.

After the first years in the Globaler Hof the assessment of the concept showed a predominantly positive opinion of the idea. And everyone said that the 50-50 mix was an enrichment but it was also

good that there should be no dominant ethnic group among the migrants (from Turkey, for example).

Today little has changed. The interviewees were consistently positive about the idea of a “mix”. This was later accompanied by undifferentiated undertones: “Problems with people from a certain country.” People think that Sozialbau should pay attention to “a balance of nationalities” when selecting new tenants. All in all a successful mix. However, Sozialbau gives no information about the concept of the Globaler Hof to new tenants (which was lamented by some interviewees).

*Thoroughly positive comments on the concept of a “mix”*

Some quotes:

*“We weren’t told about the aim. We first heard about it here. Sozialbau only said ‘different people’.”*

*“We only heard about the ‘Miteinander’ association after moving in.”*

*“I was astonished that Sozialbau hadn’t produced an information leaflet about the Globaler Hof. I heard about the 50-50 from a relative.”*

*“At first, when moving in, I didn’t know what the concept implied. Now I find it great. I have a lot of friends here. The mix is getting better and better. I’m very happy. But it can frequently be a struggle.”*

*“I find it important that we are all ‘socially similar’. At the beginning there was one family whose children got up to a lot of ‘mischief’. Now it’s quiet. The housing management mediated a lot.”*

*“The diversity is enriching for me.”*

*“When we moved in everybody was very friendly - when we were arranging the flat. We didn’t actually expect anything and were very impressed by the friendly welcome. Although our previous housing situation wasn’t bad either.”*

*“People help each other in thousands of little ways, such as tokens for the laundry.”*

*“We all know each other and get on with almost everyone.”*

*“You get parties thrown by people from Turkey, Afghanistan, India, Spain, Asia, Africa.”*

There is however the fear that what is seen as the ideal mix is changing for the worse as new tenants move in:

*“It would be good if they paid attention with new tenants that the mix is maintained. The change has a negative influence on the mix.”*

*“The new ones find it difficult in comparison to those who are integrated.”*

In the six interviews there was also one critical statement about the Globaler Hof’s programme:

*“A lot has changed for the worse. Because of the many moves there’s now a predominance of foreigners.”*

*“I wouldn’t actually describe the Globaler Hof as a place with overall ‘good neighbourliness’.”*

*“The communication doesn’t work. I didn’t imagine it like this.”*

And working people who are hardly at home?

*“The fact that different people live here? It doesn’t really matter, I’m hardly at home and don’t have many contacts here.”*

*“Good neighbourliness. I can’t complain.”*

Identification is an abstract category. A question that sheds light on the topic of “identification” is: “When you have a visit from friends or relatives who have not yet seen the Globaler Hof, what do you show them first, what do you especially point out to them? Is there something that you’re particularly proud of?”

Some of the answers:

*“Layout of the flats - super. Especially the 12 sqm loggia.”*

*“The roof garden. I walk round it with my visitors. (Unfortunately some of the gardens are not well looked after.)”*

*“The big community room.”*

*“Number 1: the flat; number 2: the garden on the roof; number 3: the laundry. Then the safe playground.”*

*One might think that the idea would wear out over the years*

Stability and mobility: according to Sozialbau the Globaler Hof has a quota of new tenancies that is comparable with other housing estates. It could be supposed that to a certain extent the idea wears down over the years. It is not upheld by the Sozialbau administration or even by the caretaker. Even in group housing projects where the idea of the communal is the motive for setting them up, the enthusiasm cannot be maintained at its initial level over years because the life circumstances of the residents change over time. There are indications of this in the interviews: “word of mouth” is a phrase often heard. It can be supposed that many new tenancies come about in this way.

## **Conclusion**

The identification of all interviewees with the idea of the Globaler Hof is strong – measured by the sometimes almost euphoric words “everything super”. It could have been expected that the microcosm of the Globaler Hof would also reflect the widespread judgments and prejudices, opinions and fears that are prevalent on all sides, particularly since 2015. However, on the housing estate the events “out there” seem to have no effect on its inner life. As in the first survey there is also a high degree of approval today and the success of the mix is emphasised. People see a definite benefit for their personal lives in the diversity and especially for the children growing up there. Getting to know others’ ways of life is seen as enriching. The achievement of this level of identification can be attributed to the following factors:

- ▶ Its voluntary nature: there appears to be no – tacit – pressure on individuals to participate in any kinds of activities.
- ▶ The 50-50 mix and the diversity among the group of migrants with the variety it brings prevent one group segregating themselves or being segregated.
- ▶ The residents are proud of many provisions within the housing complex.
- ▶ Despite its size the whole complex with about 140 flats is differentiated due to being divided into four building elements that are accessed by four separate entrances and staircases so that sub-neighbourhoods can form.

Identification with the concept also of course depends on the social status and the sensitivities of the residents. The mix does not go so far that the social status of the residents is very different, the opposite is rather the case. In comparison with “normal” housing estates in recent times, the turnover of flats is not out of the ordinary but is nevertheless a burden for the concept and also the ‘Miteinander’ association that supports it. It is difficult to get new arrivals to join. This harms social life.

## **② Everyday life at the Globaler Hof**

How residents evaluate everyday life on a housing estate can be judged from two points of view: what forms of neighbourly assistance are there? And: are there conflicts between neighbours? The common causes of conflicts between residents on housing estates are well known: the noise of children and youngsters, loud parties at night – too little peace and quiet; a lack of cleanliness and order on stairways and corridors or in the laundry, vandalism, the unpleasant smells of cooking or barbecues etc. Another level of annoyance is the feeling of being

disadvantaged because, however well a housing estate is planned, there are always “better flats”, which of course the others have.

When migrants and Austrians live on a housing estate, very different behaviour patterns exist closely side by side. Not only do the migrants have different lifestyles but even the Austrians practice various styles of life in one and the same building.

The interviewees consistently judged relations with neighbours at the Globaler Hof as positive. People greet one another and the wide entrance corridor invites “village pump” conversations. “People can also put their flowers there.” The housing estate provides many opportunities for informal encounters. And: “Where somebody comes from is secondary.” “Those who’ve been here for a long time are on first name terms.”

However, one critical aspect emerges on the theme of neighbourhood: the change of tenants. There has already been a change in 91 of the 140 flats since first occupancy. (Whereby transfers are included. It is supposed that increased rents caused by higher operating costs are a frequent reason for moving out.) The question as to how much change a good neighbourhood can tolerate cannot of course be answered. But many of the interviewees would rather see less change.

Another topic raised by interviewees follows on: isn’t the housing complex already too big for neighbourliness? In the interviews the “Stiegen” (i.e. the building elements with their own entrances and staircases) were referred to again and again. This was already the case in the previous survey. At that time there was talk that individual communities form in the different parts of the building. These were also defined, for example, as “the people from Stiege 4.” As people said, the shops also contribute to good communication: “The Turkish supermarket is great. Cheap, their range of goods is okay. You can also have something delivered.” “We meet at the Turk’s.” Also the restaurants in the building: the pizzeria, “the Chinese”. Some opinions:

*“The Globaler Hof is in any case a building with good neighbourliness.”*

*“A few older people. A neighbour needs a hand. Someone has a handicapped child. You pop by. We know each other.”*

*“I got to know the neighbours above me because of water damage. He comes from (x-country)... No problem despite the damage.”*

And of course the question of whether neighbourly contacts are rather with families or people from the same country:

*“We’re good neighbours, no matter where the neighbours come from.”*

*“Not an issue.”*

Conflicts? The usual: noise from children and youngsters. “In summer there’s a lot of music in the building. You’re virtually deluged with culture. The building has the effect of an ear trumpet.” But: the caretaker arranges things to everyone’s satisfaction. If it gets too loud people speak to their direct neighbours themselves. Conflicts do not flare up about big things but about small ones. For example, tenants who live above the pizzeria complain about the kitchen smells. And how are conflicts resolved – or also not?

*Conflicts are not sparked by big things*

*“There are a lot of small children – and that’s also good. If the children are a nuisance, we talk with them. Language? No problem.”*

*“There are people who keep out of the way of others. Sure. But it’s those who some keep out of the way of who are my friends.”*

*“There are the old enmities: for example between former Yugoslavs.”*

*“There was once trouble. People collected signatures and laid the sheet in front of the ‘opponent’s’ door with a small gift of biscuits. ‘Let’s bury the hatchet.’ And it was done.”*

*“There are also a few racist Austrians here. Older ones. They ‘slag us off’ when they’re among themselves.”*

*“Something unpleasant happens from time to time but it gets resolved. There are no extreme wars between neighbours.”*

And of course cleanliness, a central issue in many housing complexes:

*“Very satisfied” – the predominant opinion.*

Security? Not a big issue. However, rumours, like everywhere:

*“Everything can be seen well, it’s well lit. It’s okay.”*

*“It’s a hundred percent safe, we all know each other and talk to people we don’t know. Unfortunately too many changes of tenants.”*

*“If someone we don’t know comes in we ask them what they’re doing straightaway.”*

*“Apparently the daughter of a tenant was once molested in a lift by a stranger.”*

## **Conclusion**

In the Globaler Hof neighbourly help is taken for granted, probably in no different way than can also be the case on many “normal” housing estates. However, the decisive point is that the neighbourly help is to a certain extent international and ethnicity is thus not a barrier “if everything else is okay”. “You can’t be friends with everyone.” As in the first study it was also shown this time that there are evidently different milieus: “The people from staircase 2.” The fact that there are also tendencies towards withdrawal - for example from Austrians who have lived at the Globaler Hof from the beginning and from new arrivals who place less value upon neighbourliness in general or due to their way of life - is a very normal process that has little to do with a lack of agreement with the concept.

*Tendencies to withdraw are also very normal*

Conflicts which occur should be distinguished from one another. Whether something, such as a barbecue, can lead to a conflict depends on many factors: age, general opinion of foreigners, life circumstances or form of family, even on the passing mood of the person who feels disturbed. It is also decisive whether and how conflicts can be resolved. At the Globaler Hof the caretaker has the pivotal role.

### **③ The communal rooms**

Communal rooms - laundries, children’s play rooms, rooms for residents’ parties etc. - have made a substantial contribution to the social quality of Viennese housing, even if some projects have more and others less funds available for them. With “good” planning the interior layout of the building can also be more than a functional space in order to reach the apartments as quickly as possible, it can in fact also be a space for communication. The open spaces can also be places for meeting as long as the interests of the residents of the adjacent flats are protected. The interviewees are especially proud of the communal rooms at the Globaler Hof, even if in some cases they only rarely use them or not at all. The fact that those who use the communal rooms must pay for using them themselves separately is seen as positive.

*The free spaces can be communication areas*

*“The roof-garden does it.”*

*“The roof-gardens are great for making contact: there’s a barbecue once a week. There are bigger barbecue parties two or three times a year.”*

*“We enjoy making use of everything. Also the party room. For parties, birthdays. You put your name down with Akrami, collect the key and he checks the final cleaning.”*

*“Gymnastics, painting - the lot.”*

*“The laundry: a vehicle for contact. I once showed a newly-arrived Turkish woman how to use the washing machines and then she told me her whole life story.”*

Negative: the fact that the planning of the communal facilities over-stretched the mark, such as with the Turkish bath, is a handicap that evidently lasted through the years. There were complaints about high additional costs. In the meantime it has been closed.

## **Conclusion**

There is no doubt that the communal facilities are the structural precondition for successful integration at the Globaler Hof, however not only their large number and variety but also their clever layout within the building. Savings could certainly have been made with the areas but this special feature seems indispensable. Besides this are the wide corridors between the building elements conceived as communication areas. The residents are proud of this and they and the residents association ‘Miteinander’ use the communal facilities intensively. The opening of the large communal room for external events should also be seen positively, not only due to the income but also because of the image of having such a large room. Despite this the communal facilities are also mentioned when operating costs are being discussed because they are considered to be too high.

## **④ Religion and integration**

It would be a wonder if the current discussion of Islam and Islamism stirred up by the media did not change the atmosphere on housing estates. It can be supposed that the headscarf and the burka, symbols of the Islamic faith, will now be looked upon with different feelings than was the case some years ago. People had actually become used to such symbols. Other religions - Hindu, Sikh, Jewish - also have their special symbols but they are hardly seen. For Austrians the question of religion does not even arise as there is no outer sign. However, the headscarf is seen everywhere. Austrians probably hardly used to take any notice if a woman known to them as a good neighbour was wearing one, seeing it differently to a woman on the street. But that could have changed.

*The question of religious affiliation does not arise for Austrians*

The question: "It cannot be denied that there is now increased tension between the cultures and religions. How is it at the Globaler Hof?" did not surprise the interviewees. It would be unbelievable that the ambivalent attitude of Austrians - regardless of social status - towards Islam were not also reflected at the Globaler Hof. In the interviews the question of whether tensions have arisen at the Globaler Hof due to "religion" was therefore put quite openly. Statements:

*"Yes there are one or two women here who wear burkas...  
Otherwise there are no strict Muslims here. But I don't want  
to be seen as right-wing."*

*"Tensions? Not really. There's only a separation at barbecues.  
The Muslims don't eat pork so we simply have a choice."*

*"It's good for the children that a lot of different people live here.  
They get to know one another's idiosyncrasies."*

*"We go to church, they go to the mosque. It's never been an issue."*

One statement, "Yes, it is problematic with the Muslims," did not refer to life at the Globaler Hof, it was referring to the climate created by events in recent years.

## **Conclusion**

At the Globaler Hof it appears that no resident, and particularly no female resident, sees a problem in the religious affiliation of neighbours in the building. This is also shown by the parties where signs of the Muslim faith are worn with no misgivings. The only woman in the building who wears a burka was mentioned as evidence of the tolerance practiced. However, undertones can certainly be heard.

Tolerance towards the religion of others is a central indicator of integration, which should be seen from both sides, for Austrians as well as migrants. And since the opinions found in the interviews can certainly be applied to the Globaler Hof as a whole, one can speak of successful integration. In doing so a distinction must be made between internal tolerance and possibly diverging opinions on immigration in general, and that too on both sides. At the Globaler Hof it is a matter of the relationship between individuals while outside it is about ideology, politics etc. Secondly, the preconditions must be taken into account. At the Globaler Hof there are neither excluded Austrian nor excluded foreign residents, they are rather all of a similar social status. This seems to be an important factor.

## ⑤ **Architecture in everyday life**

Residents naturally judge “architecture” from a completely different perspective to specialists, and differently among themselves, which is also the case with professionals. As users the residents, especially the women, evaluate “the architecture” pragmatically in relation to its suitability for everyday use and often with applicable arguments. The following aspects are particularly important:

- ▶ That the uses to which the rooms and various parts of the building are put should not disturb others.
- ▶ The privacy of the flats and their outdoor spaces should be protected from prying eyes.
- ▶ Practical and unproblematic use – no thresholds you can trip up on, sufficient ventilation.
- ▶ Details and choice of material – it should look good.
- ▶ Special features such as roof garden, swimming pool, play areas - amenities “one can be proud of”.
- ▶ Form/design: there is no desire for an extravagant architectural style nor should it be absolutely banal.

In the first survey at the Globaler Hof in 2003 several interviewees criticised the facade, said the inner courtyard was ideal for children, found fault with one or two pieces of playground equipment, praised the roof garden etc. and saw architecture mainly in its functionality.

In the current survey some of the interviewees really let rip when it gets down to detail and they say what has proved itself in everyday life and where they see that is not the case:

*“Floor plans not up to much: long tube, no niches, no storage spaces.”*

*“Sound comes via the chimney.”*

*“You hear the people in the flat above us walking around. I need earplugs at night.”*

*“The outdoor stairways are slippery in winter.”*

*“Noise from the roof gardens in summer.”*

*“Generally bad soundproofing.”*

*“A bumpy ride for prams outside because of the gaps between the concrete paving.”*

*“We had mould in the bathroom. There should be better information about ventilation.”*

Two of those questioned put forward a whole list of suggestions for improvements, both in the flats and outside. They may all be “small details” but are important for the atmosphere. All of them are concrete suggestions for structural and cost-neutral improvements that could be taken into consideration in future planning.

## **Conclusion**

The Globaler Hof was awarded the first Vienna Housing Prize in 2012 particularly because here the functional layout of the individual areas - flats, communal rooms, open spaces - combines design - unpretentious but not banal - with its social intentions in such a simple but well-thought-out way. As a walk around the Interethnische Nachbarschaft shows, another contributing factor is that the attempt has been made to reduce the potential for conflicts with functional layouts and the selection of materials. At the time of its initiation the project contrasted with the dominant forms of construction influenced by architectural and political ambitions. In this sense it is still relevant today. As a rule residents hardly commented on general architectural topics, but as users they put forward long lists of individual improvements that could be made. Most of these suggestions are relatively cost-neutral. Even the housing management company says, “Well... a bit too much grey.”

### **⑥ The role of the caretaker**

Nowadays apartment houses no longer have a “Hausmeister” (con-cierge). The jobs that concierges used to do have been passed on to service companies. Today the caretaker is - as the word implies - someone who takes care, responsible for all large and small concerns. His qualification: social competence. Higher demands are now made of caretakers, not least due to the high proportion of migrants on the housing estates of limited-profit housing enterprises. A proportion of 50 percent migrants in a housing complex is no rarity. However, this proportion does not mean much. It depends from where and why the migrants come, whether a single ethnicity is dominant etc. .

*Key role in keeping the Globaler Hof “functioning”*

The caretaker of the Globaler Hof, Mr Akrami, who is himself a migrant from a Muslim country, has a key role in the “functioning” of the interethnic community. He has been the caretaker since the first occupancy and also lives there himself with his family. Many residents see him as “the soul” of the estate. Some of the interviewees are concerned about what will happen when he retires. What he has to say is therefore given a special place here.

Mr Akrami naturally does not want to take personal credit for the success of the Globaler Hof. Nevertheless it is not only the very

professional way in which he does his job that has made the Globaler Hof into a successful project but also his personal attitude to the residents with all their concerns - which seem small to a distant building management company.

On the one hand he emphasises that the residents of the Globaler Hof - in his view - have lived together over the years with tolerance and mutual understanding, or put simply, have been good neighbours. Example of the headscarf and burka: "That's no problem." However, it does happen that he must explain the historical context of these customs. Then there is also understanding. Akrami's basic attitude: "Talk to me." The fact that with his help the usual conflicts about noise, dirt etc. can be simply and quickly settled and that the communal facilities, although sometimes oversized, are still intensively used confirm what Akrami and the residents interviewed say. The atmosphere is good. The success of the Globaler Hof lies in the fact that things are so "normal" here. Most of the tenants have also lived here for a long time. "We've also matured."

Akrami sees his job in mediation: between residents if it gets a bit loud such as at the New Year's Eve party; when someone needs help with some household damage or if a social service is needed. "Then it's good that I live here." Life is made up of many small things that should be dealt with simply and quickly. All the interviewees find it very good that A. Akrami lives in the building. But Akrami also sees that the Globaler Hof is not an isolated island cut off from current events in the country and in Vienna. Akrami fears that the mood spread by the media could also have negative effects at the Globaler Hof. There is of course also reason to suppose that personal acquaintances and neighbourliness have become strong enough over the years to see prejudices coming from the outside for what they are.

*See prejudices coming from the outside for what they are*

There are concerns about the repeated rent increases as a result of rising additional costs, seen as primarily due to the communal rooms. These increases, as justified and understandable as they may be, conceal an "explosive force" within the community and the model, which categorically includes the communal facilities. It could be questioned from the outside - if it is too expensive for the tenants.

Akrami is also the most important contact person of the 'Miteinander' association. All the interviewees said they were very satisfied with the caretaker's work. "Without him it wouldn't be what it is. Akrami - a stroke of luck." "Hopefully he won't retire too soon." The caretaker is also a buffer for the Sozialbau building management. Whereas the caretaker received the highest praise, interviewees were very critical about the building management. Residents were badly informed and felt like supplicants. Requests have to go via the head office. Some statements:

*“Sozialbau is always there for us. But Akrami is the key person.”*

*“If you’re not getting anywhere with Sozialbau and can’t find anyone responsible, it’s better to go straight to Akrami. He deals with everything.”*

*“Takes care of everything.”*

## **Conclusion**

The caretaker is the soul of the Globaler Hof. The residents and the building management company are unanimous on this. He is always there, mediating, putting things in order, giving advice, helping, occasionally reprimanding someone, and is also the contact person for the building management. Seen independently of the personal aspects of the caretaker, because he will also retire and a successor will have to be found, the following aspects should be taken into account:

- ▶ In view of the fact that there is such a large percentage of migrants on housing estates, it would be good if the caretaker also has a migration background.
- ▶ One requirement is a qualification in mediating conflicts that can arise when Austrians and migrants live together - intercultural social competence.
- ▶ Even if it can be difficult for the caretaker, it would be good if he lived on the estate.
- ▶ The caretaker needs the trust of both the residents and the management company. This also requires a high level of social competence.

## **Sozialbau – the Housing Management**

The issue of migration is present every day in the allocation of flats and the management of housing estates, and for the staff there are certainly always new and increasing demands to be met. This is why experience gained from projects like the Globaler Hof is of great relevance. Not only should residents want to be happy with their housing estate but so should the housing management company. This example should have a positive effect on the company.

Since its first occupancy the Globaler Hof has been taken care of by the same manager. For Sozialbau the Globaler Hof was also an experiment. There was no way of foreseeing whether the 50-50 idea would prove itself in practice. It was here that “get-to-know-you”

meetings were organised for the first time, where residents meet up before moving in. This proved worthwhile and such meetings are now standard with the company. According to the Sozialbau housing management company the 50-50 mix of Austrians and migrants has now “almost automatically” become the rule on the housing estates. There is no instrument for controlling the mix of foreign households in order to achieve as wide a range of ethnicities as possible. Diversity should be the aim.

*The 50:50 mix has almost automatically become the rule*

The housing management company does not intervene in the everyday affairs of the housing estate but pays regular visits. There has also been positive experience with the communal rooms which is transferable: the varied provision – “No, there aren’t too many communal rooms,” – the functional layout is exemplary. The “Miteinander” association, which organises parties and other activities, makes an important contribution here.

Numbers of tenants moving out of the Globaler Hof are around the same as on other Sozialbau housing estates. Since first occupancy 49 of the 140 flats are still occupied by their first tenants and there has been a change in 91 flats. Some of these were vacated but passed on. The ground floor areas (restaurants, kindergarten) are all rented. There have not been longer periods with these premises standing empty, which would damage the image. There is criticism of the housing management company for a lack of information:

- ▶ There is criticism that Sozialbau does not inform new tenants of the aims of the Globaler Hof. “You only get to know about them afterwards, if at all.”
- ▶ There is talk of a feeling that the 50-50 is no longer the case and that there is now a predominance of migrants.

The housing management company also faces a challenge when it comes to measures that involve costs. The periodically rising operating costs are also a burden on the company but it has little influence on many items – meaning that it can only make savings with many smaller items such as lighting, where more economical bulbs have been fitted, or with garden maintenance etc. This has been discussed with representatives of the association. One tenant said, “Money could be saved. Why is there a cleaning crew when Akrami does everything anyway?” This shows that it would be good to have an information point at some eye-catching place in the building detailing who is responsible for which jobs and what each one costs. The housing management company is also involved in which TV channels should be received by the central system. At the moment there are 117 stations including 95 non-Austrian. The interviewees were satisfied with the channels

selected by Sozialbau. One statement: "There's no channel from our country but we can get it via the internet. No problem." One issue was also the request for video surveillance, but this is not in accordance with Sozialbau's philosophy.

### **Conclusion**

The residents seem to be satisfied with the management company in everyday matters. "They take care." It is appreciated that the company makes regular visits. The 50-50 mix at Globaler Hof was still an experiment, today it is often already the rule on housing estates. In this regard the experience gained at the Globaler Hof has certainly been very helpful. Within the company the Globaler Hof seems to have a good reputation as a special project.

The interviewees point to one aspect that is by no means only relevant for the Globaler Hof: how far should - or could - Sozialbau steer the social mix on a housing estate? It is suggested that a predominance of migrants could have negative effects, as could the dominance of one ethnicity. Whether this supposition corresponds to reality is not the question here. On the topic of integration psychological factors are more decisive than facts.

### **⑧ Rent and running costs**

Some of the interviewees, including the caretaker, were very keen to talk about the rent. The rent level was already an important issue in the first survey shortly after moving in but in a different context to this survey. At that time it was said that the fact that the rent was - comparatively - not low ensured that residents came from more or less similar social circumstances (milieu was not meant here). The rent level was seen as a selection instrument.

In this new 2016 survey the concern was expressed that residents would have to move out because of the rent - especially the operating costs. The topic was also broached that the upkeep of the communal rooms, a central part of the project, was too expensive. However, opinions differ. For example, one interviewee who had recently moved in said, "Great price in relation to what you get for it. The flats disappear fast, there's a queue. There's also a lot of renovation going on."

In fact running costs have increased steeply over a few years (also due to increased external charges). However, during the last accounting period they could be reduced. The question of whether the rent was currently reasonable was seen in different ways. One interviewee, just recently moved in, had for example done some research and found

*Communal rooms too expensive to maintain?*

the rent level completely acceptable in comparison. The statement, "Acceptable, yes but..." possibly sums up the general murmuring against rent levels - sometimes justified, sometimes perhaps not.

New arrivals who had studied prices on the Vienna housing market while looking for a flat see the rent level at the Globaler Hof as reasonable, whereas the long-time residents see the rent increases from the perspective of when they moved in. (The question of the reasonableness or affordability of rents in general and currently in Vienna in particular cannot be taken up within the framework of this study.)

### **Overall conclusion**

It can evidently be said that the Globaler Hof is a case of successful integration which can also be successful in the future. There is of course also criticism on the part of the residents - where would that not be the case? But all in all none of the residents would say that they did not feel at ease in this social space and international neighbourhood or that they wanted to move out at the next opportunity. The fact that over the course of the years there are ups and downs in neighbourly life is also a part of the reality of life and should be seen positively. Because this is not a project burdened by an idea, rather the mix is generally becoming normality. In the process integration is not a category that refers to migrants alone.

*Ups and downs  
as part of the  
reality of life*

Chances exist for successful integration on housing estates like this, because integration is not something that can be ordered or organised institutionally but takes place through human contacts in everyday life. It is therefore a question of providing the preconditions and the organisational and structural framework.



# Living Together on Housing Estates

JOACHIM BRECH / HEIDRUN FEIGELFELD

Empirical investigation of newer  
Sozialbau housing estates in Vienna

## Impulse and aim

This study examines housing estates built by Sozialbau<sup>1</sup> between 2000 and 2016 from the point of view of whether and to what extent we can speak of “good coexistence” of residents and what preconditions were decisive for this aim. It is a question of whether residents feel integrated themselves and whether they share in the social life of the housing estates commensurate with their opportunities and wishes.

These questions are relevant because an ethnically heterogeneous mix of residents has in the meantime become the norm on housing estates of limited-profit housing associations – which many would like to assume does not exactly make coexistence easy. “Good coexistence” therefore means that residents encounter one another with mutual respect and recognition of each other’s distinctive characteristics despite their differences with regard to social status, ethnic origin, age, gender or lifestyle.

*A heterogeneous  
mix of ethnicities  
has since become  
the norm*

Providing space for this to occur is one of the central tasks. Sozialbau claims to be the “number one” among Austrian private and limited-profit housing associations and alone in 2016 managed around 51,000 rented and owner-occupied apartments. Based on the fact that the average number of residents per apartment is 2.5, the company provides housing for almost 130,000 people, which corresponds to around 7% of Vienna residents or approximately the populations of European cities such as Oxford, Lausanne or Delft. This alone shows the scale of the responsibility carried by such a large enterprise as Sozialbau: primarily towards its residents but equally towards the city of Vienna and its citizens.

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<sup>1</sup>) Sozialbau AG is a purely Austrian association. As an operational company SOZIALBAU AG oversees (since 1993 as a public company) a cooperative group consisting of the limited-profit housing cooperatives FAMILIE, VOLKSBAU and WOHNBAU. It also has shares in several other cooperative associations active in housing.

Around the year 2000 the subject of migration was once again riding high in Vienna. The management of Sozialbau wanted to send out a signal with a special project: integration, or ‘good coexistence’ of people of many nationalities can be successful if the appropriate conditions are created for it to occur.” To this end Sozialbau initiated the “Inter-ethnische Nachbarschaft” (“Interethnic Neighbourhood”) – also called “Globaler Hof” (“Global Estate”) – with subsidised rental accommodation. A detailed evaluation in 2003 examined whether we could speak of successful integration of migrants and ultimately also of Austrians (see the article on this subject in this book). Since then, and not only in Vienna, this model project has repeatedly been cited as a reference point for successful interethnic coexistence. Sozialbau has used the experience gained here for housing estates constructed since then and the in-house company culture has also been further developed in this direction.

The housing estate was ready for first occupation in 2000 and was intended to have an approximate fifty-fifty mix of Austrians and migrants with as many ethnicities as possible represented among the migrants. Sozialbau wanted to provide both the structural framework – including many communal rooms and spaces – as well as the social framework – a highly qualified caretaker service. A survey three years after first occupation in 2003 in fact found that of the 140 households on the estate 48 % were not only made up of residents of different origin but of “non-naturalised migrants”, thus – until then – without Austrian citizenship.

In 2003 Sozialbau commissioned a detailed evaluation to find out whether in the case of the “Globaler Hof” one could speak of successful integration of migrants and ultimately also of Austrians on the housing estate and beyond in an open, tolerant urban society (Brech; Ludl (Ed.) 2003). Since then, and not only in Vienna, the “Globaler Hof” has repeatedly been cited as a reference point for successful interethnic coexistence. In 2009 the Municipality of Vienna awarded the project – its architecture and social facilities – the First Vienna Residential Construction Prize.

From the middle of 2000 until spring 2016 Sozialbau constructed and rented a further 8,300 apartments on 69 housing estates. These are the subject of the study presented here. In the often emotionally inflated discussion surrounding integration, this also enables facts and data to be brought forward and to learn from both positive and negative experiences. The aim is to obtain a picture that is as comprehensive and clear as possible.

*Integration  
discussion often  
emotionally  
inflated*

## Housing estates as a reflection of the city

With the refugees arriving since 2015 the debate in the media on the integration of refugees has gained in topicality. It can be assumed that this debate will have an impact on housing estates. Although not all refugees stay, those who do will at some point in the future have access to the market segment of limited-profit housing.

*Avoiding segregation is a central issue*

The European city has always been shaped by migration. One should then think that people in cities have experience with it. Nevertheless migration is time and again felt by citizens to be an intrusion into their familiar way of life, their culture and their economy and as competition on the markets. The arrival of people from other countries is therefore unwelcome to many and they feel that it is imposed upon them. The fact that the integration of migrants is ultimately successful, even if often after long and conflict-fraught processes, is an historical experience that is however currently not holding up. It also depends upon from which cultural groups and in what numbers the people come.

According to a more recent study (Verwiebe et al., Vienna 2015), the structure of migration into Vienna has been changing over the last few years in another respect: a larger number of highly-qualified people are coming and due to high migration from EU countries the proportion of the more highly-qualified among migrants is even higher than among Austrians. This survey found a high and even continually growing approval of migration and the cultural diversity that comes with it. Around 85% of Viennese see a positive impulse for the life of the city and over 90% of those questioned think that contacts with migrants promote mutual empathy. However, with this cross-sectional view it should not be overlooked that there are groups among migrants who are exposed to discrimination in various areas of life.

Cultural diversity is a central precondition for integration. Migrants therefore come into the cities, especially cities with a comparatively high proportion of migrants. They come into various types of housing stock – private rental, old stock, subsidised rental, social housing. In Vienna this is mainly the mid to late 19th century (“Gründerzeit”) housing stock in densely built up areas. Only after some time and under certain conditions do they become eligible for subsidised housing.

But many people with a migration history already live in housing of limited-profit housing companies. These housing estates are to a certain extent a reflection of the city itself. Avoiding segregation is a central theme of urban development and quarters with a one-sided population structure should not come about. The talk is of a “mix”.

However, a “mix” is also an issue for the housing companies.

Housing estates, especially larger ones, are in a certain respect “segregated” social spaces in which social and economic networks can form. Segregation fulfils the wish to live with one’s own kind, it facilitates good neighbourly contacts and the development of help networks. On the other hand, as the word implies, it can lead to the formation of tightly closed societies and to parallel worlds and archaic forms of community which do not conform with our democratic values. Integration becomes more difficult, if not impossible.

What does this mean for the microcosmos of a housing estate? It would be fatal to give conclusive answers and want to draw lines. The realities of life are far too differentiated and dynamic – which constitutes the quality of our cities, residential areas and housing estates.

*Ultimately a challenge to be met decentrally and on the spot*

It thus also becomes clear that integration is a challenge that applies equally to Austrians as to migrants and that an appropriate framework must exist, but that integration is ultimately a challenge that must be met on the spot and in everyday life. Housing estates therefore take on great importance for the city and its districts. From a spatial and social point of view they are the places where this guideline for urban development must be realised.

If Vienna continually takes first place in the international ranking of cities with the best quality of life, it is to a large extent due to its limited-profit housing companies, and a company of the size and importance of Sozialbau undoubtedly plays a great part in this. It is to a large degree housing and its social quality that makes a city attractive and contributes to the satisfaction of its citizens. Without the limited-profit housing companies the city would lose important partners. Their special characteristic is that on the one hand they function as businesses and on the other they are committed to a long social tradition.

Whereas in politics integration is a normative category that is repeatedly reinterpreted according to opportunity, for the housing companies it is a totally pragmatic, permanent and continual challenge. It is expected of limited-profit companies that their field of work is to build and manage housing complexes with affordable flats as well as to find concrete answers to the various social challenges.

The aim of this study is to describe this “microcosm housing estate” with all its ambivalence. How much, and what, social difference does it tolerate? What contribution does the housing company make to “good coexistence”?

## Methods and representativeness

A series of methods was used for the study. A catalogue of questions was structured in such a way that conclusions close to reality could be drawn from the overview and the overlaps. On this basis, after analysis of key data on the relevant 69 estates with 8,300 apartments, a wide-ranging, written questionnaire was drawn up and sent to a representative selection (16 estates, around 2,300 apartments). Parallel to this, oral interviews were carried out on four of these housing estates. Detailed information from over five hundred respondents was taken into account. In addition, a great deal of supplementary information was obtained, particularly on visits to all the estates.

### Methods used

- ▶ **Written questionnaire:** On the basis of statistical data on the housing estates (address, number of apartments, date of occupancy) detailed questionnaires were sent, personally addressed to all residents of a representative selection of housing estates with a stamped-addressed envelope. Similar questionnaires were also sent to the caretakers.
- ▶ **Oral interviews:** On the recommendation of Sozialbau four housing estates were selected that were as different as possible and Sozialbau arranged for the authors to meet a maximum of five people or households for detailed, structured talks which were recorded – and to do the same with the caretakers of those housing estates.
- ▶ **Visits, photo documentation, lists of infrastructure facilities:** For a better understanding of what the residents had to say, information on the real situations of the housing estates was gathered in various ways.
- ▶ **Statistical evaluation:** The very satisfactory anonymous response to the written questionnaires via Sozialbau (see “Residents’ answers” below) was processed and formed the basis for the content analyses. This was supplemented by transcripts of the interviews and specialist research supported the interpretations.

## Statistics

### ► *Sozialbau housing estates from 2000*

In accordance with the aim of gaining a representative picture of the situations and opinions on newer Sozialbau residential estates in Vienna, these 69 estates with a total of 8,300 apartments first occupied between 2000 and 2016 were included.

An overview of the housing estates shows a very varied picture. Size differs greatly – from an apartment house with fourteen flats to an estate with 443 flats. Roughly classified, almost 60 % of apartments are on smaller housing estates (56 with fewer than 200 flats), and around 40 % on 13 larger estates.

The locations of the estates in the city are also of very different character. Around 20 estates are each located in one of the three larger metropolitan areas into which the city can be very roughly divided. In the southern districts (around 40 % of apartments), to the north and north-east of the Danube (also known as “Transdanubia”, 30 % of apartments) and the other 30 % in the rest of the city.

It can also be said that Sozialbau’s building activity has been continuous between 2000 and 2016. Every five years an average of at least twenty housing estates with around 2,800 apartments were first occupied. Only between 2006 and 2010 was construction activity slightly below average.

### The newer Sozialbau housing estates in Vienna

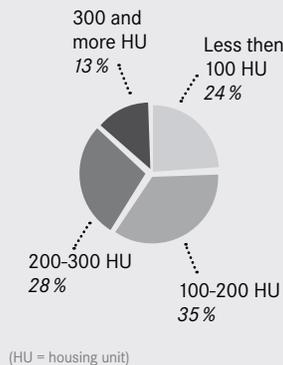
Percentage according to housing units

n = 8,300

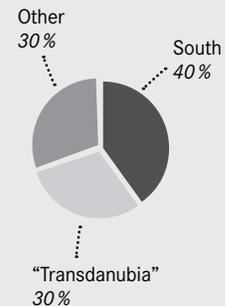
#### According to construction period 2000–2016



#### According to size



#### According to location in the city



Source: the diagrams are based on the survey by Brech/Feigelfeld of Sozialbau housing estates first occupied between 2000 and 2016

### ► **The selected housing estates and their residents**

The sixteen chosen housing estates with 2,320 apartments well represent the categories of period of occupancy, size and location in the city. The spectrum is also wide with regard to building density – it ranges from lower building density (floor area ratio<sup>2</sup> FAR 0.5) up to very high building density of (FAR 2.7). With the representative selection various levels of indoor and outdoor infrastructure on the housing estates are also taken into account. This was especially important for questions asking for evaluations in this regard. Attention was also paid to the inclusion of various legal forms of occupancy (subsidised rental and owner-occupied).

Distribution to all residents on these estates generated a return of a good 21 % with almost five hundred filled-in questionnaires, meaning that just as many households or apartments were reached. Here too, despite differences between the estates, a very good picture of the overall situation was gained in the evaluation of location, size and age category so that the results can be regarded as a realistic description of situations and opinions.

*A realistic picture of the situation and opinions*

### ► **The residents who responded**

In the overall evaluation of the empirical results it should be noted that these are not the statements of a cross-section of the population of Vienna but in many respects of a “special selection” primarily made up of residents of newer subsidised housing estates. This means that these are people and families who, for various reasons, have moved house over the last 16 years, some of them very recently. It is a group of people who fulfil the requirements for access to subsidised housing and can also afford it.

A certain amount of time was necessary to fill out the relatively long questionnaire, the more so because it was only in German. This certainly also influenced the response rate. Nevertheless a thoroughly categorisable picture emerged. The answers are balanced according to gender. As could be expected, the ages of the residents are on average younger than the population of Vienna. However, all age groups are well represented. The largest age group is that between 36 and 50 years old. With 40 %, families with children are dominant, many with school-aged children and all other forms of living alone or together are also represented.

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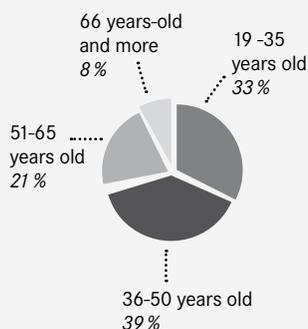
**2)** The floor area ratio (FAR) is the ratio of a building's total floor area (gross floor area) to the size of the plot of land upon which it is built.

The middle-class was strongly represented among those answering, as seen from the information about education and training, occupation and average household income. Middle and higher levels of education predominate – a good half of residents are high-school graduates or have higher qualifications, particularly younger residents, 40 % of whom have completed an apprenticeship or have technical qualifications. There is also a predominance of white-collar workers with by far a good half of all other occupations. Pensioners at most make up one out of seven.

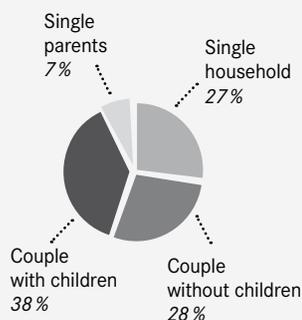
## The respondents

n=498 from 16 estates

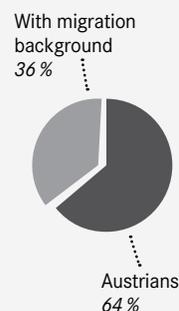
### According to age



### According to household type



### According to migration background



More than four out of ten households have a total net income of 2,000 to 3,000 Euros per month (36 % less, 21 % more). This is certainly also greatly influenced by the fact that the families have more than one earner. Only around 10 % claim housing allowance.

The nineteen people who were personally interviewed approximately corresponded to the average of those who answered the questionnaire. The twelve caretakers answering the special questionnaires, four of whom were personally interviewed, were predominantly middle-aged men.

## Defining “migration history”

One central aim of the study was to find out whether people with or without a migration history have different points of view. Various questions helped to represent each person’s migration history statistically. A good third (36 %) were “people with some kind of migration history” and a maximum of two-thirds (64 %) were “without migration history”.

The definition used here “with migration history” includes people who have been naturalised Austrian and people without Austrian citizenship, as well as those whose partner can be categorised as such. “Without migration history” means “Austrian since birth” which can thus include one or the other whose parents once came to Austria from abroad and then obtained Austrian citizenship.

This distinction helped gain a series of illuminating results from the data. However, it must always be borne in mind that this does not portray a “comprehensive reality”. Due to the specific character of such a survey it can be supposed that the proportion of people with migration history generally remains underrepresented, and/or those among them who answered were almost exclusively long-time Austrian citizens and people of European origin, as can be clearly seen from the data.

For the nineteen oral interviews on four estates we therefore consciously contacted as diverse a group of people as possible. Among them two-thirds had a migration history, some of them also from outside Europe. This was very useful for deeper analyses.

# Everyday life together

## ① Social contacts as an indicator

*Hardly anywhere else do so many direct contacts occur*

It is everyday life that makes living on a housing estate agreeable and untroubled but it can also make it oppressive and the greatest influence on this is first and foremost contacts between residents. Hardly anywhere else are there so many direct social contacts as on housing estates. Everybody is involved: children, boys and girls, teenagers, women and men of all ages as well as the disabled – each with their own life story.

It is almost impossible to design a housing estate where the residents do not have to meet each other when they leave their flats or come home. Today, where the cost effectiveness of building layout demands that as many flats as possible are connected to one lift (which is why buildings are often found with outdoor access to upper floors or central access), meeting neighbours in the building is unavoidable (it is a matter of limited-profit companies' housing estates, not anonymous apartment buildings). Even the access zones are not only planned according to economic demands or building regulations – they could often be a lot smaller – but also explicitly as communication spaces for residents. This was also the case on the estates investigated, whereby contacts in the communal areas and outdoors should also be taken into consideration.

In the survey “contact” was firstly positively connoted, possible conflicts were dealt with in a separate question. It goes without saying that one does not pass neighbours from the same floor without greeting them. Therefore under “contacts” the question was asked whether and to what extent encounters with neighbours come about which go beyond saying “good morning”, and a scale was suggested: few contacts, up to five neighbours, and beyond that more than five. As with all aspects of life together, it should also be taken into account here that there are old and new housing estates, that the motivation for social contacts depends on one's social situation (it is clear that young women with children have similar topics of conversation) and that the length of residency plays a role as well as the size of the housing estate and its functional organisation.

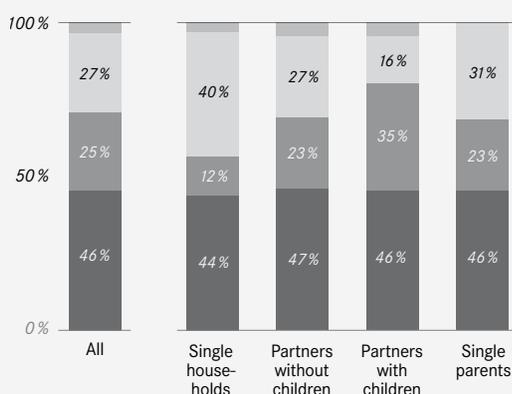
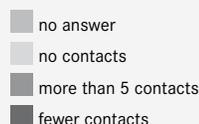
*Do you have contacts with neighbours that “go beyond saying good morning”?*

The survey showed that a good 70 % of residents have closer neighbourly contacts beyond polite greeting. As was to be expected the smaller circle is dominant (up to five neighbours) and this is almost twice as much as those with more than five. With “good coexistence” should one have expected this figure to be still higher? The fact that a quarter of residents have no neighbourly contacts does not at first appear to be such a good sign.

So let us first look at the size and age of the housing estates: the range of variation is relatively high. A linear change would be expected with increasing size but this is not the case. The rate of contact is highest on very small estates (less than 100 flats) and is dominated by those in a small circle. Medium-sized housing estates (200 to 300 flats) have not many fewer contacts. The other sizes have considerably fewer. It is therefore questionable whether a meaningful relation is visible.

### Neighbourly contacts that go beyond saying “good morning”

According to household / percentage of respondents  
n = 498



Taking the age of estates into account, it is obvious that neighbourly contacts cannot be as far developed on newer housing estates. When moving in, residents first concentrate on their flats. Contacts form over time – at first more frequently in a smaller circle and then they broaden. But this cannot be the decisive influence on the frequency of contacts as a whole because on older estates (occupied between 11 and 16 years) the figure is still lower. The most communicative seem to be estates of medium age (three quarters of residents with frequent contacts). It can be supposed that residents have had enough time to get to know each other better but conflicts have not yet crept in or there has not yet been much turnover of occupants.

*The most decisive factor is the residents' phase of life*

Now a look at the type of households which shows the basic differences: the residents' phase of life is most clearly decisive and influences the character of the estates. Single-person households have by far the fewest contacts. It is evidently more difficult for single-parents to have contacts, less difficult for couples. It is easiest – or mostly sought after – for families with children (almost 80 % are connected).

The proportion of those who have a small circle of contacts is around the same for all types of households (approx. 43 %). The overall differences come about mainly because the proportion of those with extended contacts strongly diverges. Life together on the estates is greatly influenced by the narrow mix on first occupancy: many of those moving to a new estate are young families. In any case there remains around one sixth of residents who for whatever reason (from choice, lack of time or due to conflicts?) have no contacts with neighbours beyond polite greeting.

## ② The “annoyance” factor

Whereas “contact” had a positive connotation, the negative was naturally also interesting: whether there had often been annoyance. It would be unrealistic to suppose that living so closely together, wall to wall, balcony to balcony, terrace to terrace, would not lead to problems. Or: everyone would show consideration for others on their own initiative. “Good coexistence” without agreed or prescribed rules can hardly be imagined, otherwise there would be no need for house rules.

The most important rules are those relating to noise and cleanliness. This is an important subject because noise and a lack of cleanliness do not only affect personal well-being but also because not keeping to the rules is quickly and prejudicially attributed to certain social groups. There are sufficient places for a lack of order and cleanliness: access areas (corridors, stairways, lifts), the communal spaces from the underground garage to the roof terrace, the spaces for children and teenagers etc. as well as the many private spaces such as balconies and terraces that are open to view.

The rules on the housing estates are oriented towards the common standards in our culture. However, they are not unambiguous. Whether one is annoyed by noise is not a question of decibels but depends on the kind of noise, who is making it and the frame of mind of the person who feels annoyed. It is similar with cleanliness: one person sees a scrap of paper as dirt, another does not even notice it. Only serious breaches of order and cleanliness can be sanctioned.

One indication of “good coexistence” is when conflicts due to

different opinions and behaviour can be solved to mutual satisfaction by the “adversaries” by themselves or with the help of the caretaker (see the article by Walter Weiland in this book). Visiting Sozialbau housing estates one sees a large number of notices about these basic rules (prohibitive signs, regulations for use) which appear unnecessary because they seem obvious. However, there are individual cases that can lead to conflict and a notice is needed in case sanctions must be imposed. These include clear indications for the use of outdoor areas, such as notices for dog owners. As a result children and adults know that certain games can be played here but not there. Such rules are especially important for the swimming pools on some housing estates as well as with regard to cleanliness.

There is plenty of potential for conflicts, especially in summer when windows are open and balconies, terraces and communal areas are used intensively. Residents have “contact” with each other indirectly which is not always desired, such as with music, loud voices or smell or because they can be seen by many neighbours when they are on their balcony or terrace.

*Plenty of potential for conflicts*

Good design should attempt to organise housing estates so that the smallest noise is not heard by the next-door neighbours. For example, balconies should not be directly adjacent and only separated by a thin wall (which astonishingly is often neglected and we could see on our visits how residents somehow try to protect themselves). However, even the best planning can be no guarantee of trouble-free life but can only create good preconditions.

Residents do have to keep to certain rules – which is also a question of milieu. Every caretaker and every housing management company knows the frequent reasons for annoyance on housing estates: disturbance from loud music, loud evening visits or slamming doors, annoyance through a lack of care on the stairs, in hallways and communal facilities, barbecues on the terrace or balcony – and of course due to what is seen as the improper behaviour of children and teenagers. The question about annoyance did not relate to the general situation on the estate but whether there had more often been trouble with other residents and the reason for it:

*Have you had trouble with other residents more often? If yes, was it mostly about:*

- noise,*
- cleanliness,*
- barbecues on the balcony/terrace,*
- using the communal facilities (such as laundry etc.),*
- the behaviour of children or teenagers or for other reasons?*

If 61 % say they have more often had trouble with other residents, that is a very high rate. It needs to be differentiated: who had trouble? Are there differences according to the age or size of the housing estates? And what was the trouble about?

Couples with or without children have an average level of trouble. It is especially low with single households and surprisingly: the level is above average for the small group of single parents at over 70 %. The higher the age group, the more frequently they have trouble with neighbours, but it is lower with the oldest group from 66 years old. Among the 51-65 year-olds it is still around 70 % who have problems with others. The fact that much older residents have already lived on the estate for a long time could have a noticeable influence.

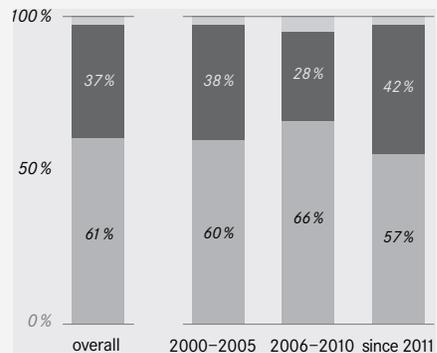
Looking at the estates according to year of construction – irrespective of how old or new – a majority of residents have had problems with others more often. Small differences are recognisable according to the age of estates but it cannot be concluded that there is more trouble the older the estate is. There is obviously a “base” of annoyance just below the overall average and the highest level of two thirds is found on estates occupied for 6 to 10 years. Contrary to general opinion there is not the most trouble on larger estates – on the contrary. Fewer than half the residents report more frequent conflicts, on the smaller estates it is around two thirds.

### Annoyance more often with other residents

According to construction period

n = 495

- no answer
- no
- yes



In an overall evaluation it should be taken into account that the psychological side should not be ignored in the question of annoyance. If one does not want to present oneself as a notorious “do-gooder”, it is normal to feel a kind of “basic annoyance” – even if we have no indicators from this supposition for the empirical findings. Here we are dealing with a question of mentality.

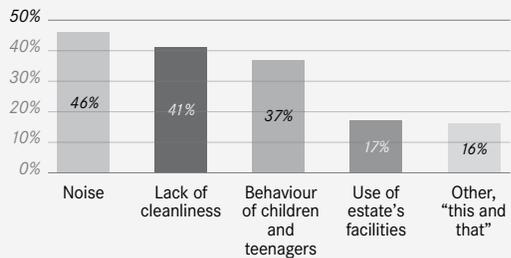
► **Some causes**

Residents can be disturbed by a wide range of things. Most of the supposed reasons for annoyance were confirmed by the answers. Of all responders 37% mentioned the behaviour of children and teenagers, 41% cleanliness and up to 46% noise. The only minor reasons for conflict are evidently the use of facilities and barbecues (both under 20%).

Looking more closely at the group of those 61% who stated that they had more frequent trouble with other residents – and only these included the reasons – the picture becomes clearer still. If someone was annoyed it was almost always about noise, but not only. Annoyance about a lack of cleanliness and the behaviour of children and teenagers quite often goes hand in hand with noise.

**Reasons for annoyance with other residents**

Overall average  
More answers possible  
n = 498



Noise is generally a problem. Almost half of residents questioned complained about it and they also named the troublemakers: children and teenagers – about 40% said so. This is not a surprising result and also not an indication of “bad coexistence” because this generational problem can hardly be solved on housing estates, especially those with relatively high building density, and flares up again and again. No play areas can be created in communal spaces that could not be a potential disturbance to neighbouring flats. It is to be supposed that the noise of children and teenagers primarily comes from their outdoor activities. It is easy to imagine that a swimming pool located in a narrow courtyard can easily disturb the neighbours in summer – even though answers to the survey put the swimming pool at the top of the list in terms of importance, intensity of use and as a showpiece (more on this in later chapters).

It should also be taken into account that every housing estate has its history. They grow older just like their residents, there are changes (people moving out and others moving in) and the proportion of younger families and the elderly is continually in flux. Noise from one’s own

children is more easily tolerated and older people can enjoy life on the estate or feel disturbed.

A good 40% of those asked reported annoyance with neighbours about a lack of cleanliness – also a high level. But what is this about? This quota shows that a majority share the same values: it should be very clean. But where is it “dirty”? This complaint about a lack of cleanliness is surprising and not easily comprehensible in view of the positive impression gained on visiting the estates. Of course, other residents are given the blame because one sees one’s own behaviour as correct. There is less annoyance about the use of communal facilities, whereby it is mostly the laundry and children’s play room that are meant – probably because they are governed by precise rules.

There remain the free spaces and the hallways, corridors and staircases, the underground garage and the garbage rooms. Here the interviews showed that the lack of cleanliness more often includes the cleaning companies as well as the housing management as being responsible (although there is predominantly satisfaction about their competence – see the chapter below on caretakers). There are also transition zones between apartment and communal space: the balcony, the ground-floor flats’ private gardens, the area in front of one’s flat – even if these are small. The number of things that are deposited in such transition zones – behaviour very much determined by milieu – can quickly lead to accusations of a lack of order and cleanliness. There are usually no precise rules about this, which can lead to the creation of conflict areas.

A breach of orderly principles can also be seen as a violation of aesthetic sensibility which in turn is connected to indicators of social standing: one does not want to live on a housing estate where the residents display “codings” which point to a lower social status – this subject will be further dealt with in the answers to “What do you show your friends?” It is easily imaginable that here are some of the reasons for annoyance at a lack of cleanliness because it is not easily comprehensible when residents complain of annoyance with their fellow residents for this reason. As previously mentioned, visits to 16 selected housing estates gave an exceptionally positive impression. There were virtually no traces of devastation, neither in more hidden zones such as stairways and lifts nor in the communal facilities or outdoor areas.

Barbecues on balconies and terraces interestingly did not present themselves as grounds for annoyance. Perhaps because nowadays this is what almost everybody does in summer. Nevertheless this result is not entirely expected since they can often lead to disputes and be taken as far as legal proceedings. There was also hardly anything to notice of the infamous “roast mutton in the courtyard”, which was for a long time a trite synonym for interethnic conflict.

According to our findings a smaller proportion of residents live without noteworthy annoyance at other residents but a larger proportion mention it. Many different reasons were given and this has obviously been the reality on these estates over the last 16 years (but older housing estates are also presumably not without frequent annoyance).

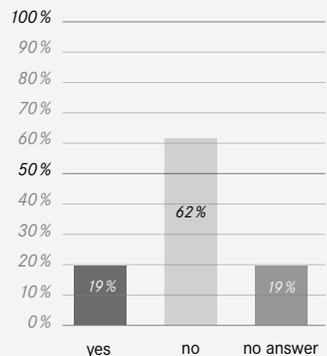
► **Possible solutions to conflict**

Of the residents who clearly described the annoyance they had with other residents, not even a fifth of them was satisfied with how the conflicts were solved. Six out of ten said they were not solved well (one fifth made no comment). This must be noted as a negative item for “good coexistence”. There are two possibilities for resolving a conflict:

- People talk to each other and agree on certain rules and codes of conduct (music yes, but only between ... and ... o’clock).
- Or people try to raise the annoyance to a formal level by getting the caretaker and the housing management involved (some people like going directly to the latter). In fact, questions about the building, courtyard and garden are predominantly the reason for turning to the caretaker.

**Conflicts mainly satisfactorily solved?**

Proportions of those annoyed  
n = 398



Caretakers apparently see the question of a good solution to conflict somewhat differently. More positively, perhaps more pragmatically with a view to the “do-able” (see the chapter “Caretakers”). When talking about solutions to conflict with caretakers and housing managers outside of this project, one often hears: it’s individual cases that keep

everyone especially busy, and conflicts can only “very seldom not be solved”, and “people don’t learn much”.

### ③ **Facilities on the housing estates**

Communal rooms in the building, children’s play rooms, laundries and much more are an important precondition for social life. Removing some functions from the flat such as doing the washing is not only seen as making sense for economic reasons, it also provides opportunities for communication. Among other things, flats are not big enough to invite many guests – one good reason among many others to provide a communal room, such as gymnastics, further education etc. (Facilities such as garages and bicycle parking areas were not included, all of the housing estates investigated have rooms for prams and bicycles.) All of this makes a considerable contribution to the quality of a housing estate – for every single person. But does it also promote “good coexistence”? The “Globaler Hof”, Sozialbau’s model project, has particularly good facilities including a very large communal room and several smaller ones on the roofs. They are regarded as being of central importance for the success of the project. Because such a significant role has been attributed to the communal facilities, we devote a lot of space to this point.

*Laundry room  
often with  
adjacent  
children’s play  
room*

On all Sozialbau housing estates, in addition to a pram and bicycle store room, there is as a rule a basic set of facilities: the laundry room, often with adjacent children’s play room and usually a playground outside. Depending on the size and time of construction other free spaces have been provided for many years, increasingly since 2000 – communal facilities such as sauna, fitness room, roof terrace and sometimes even a swimming pool.

The discussion about the value of expensive communal facilities is controversial. If they are not used for some time it is said that they are unnecessary. But even residents who do not use the facilities often do not consider them superfluous. In fact, communal facilities are used to different degrees and some residents think that those that go further than stipulated would increase the rent.

If facilities are not used over a longer period, they could be seen as dispensable. This does not take into account the fact that life on a housing estate changes and that residents go through different phases of life, such as small children becoming teenagers. If, on the other hand, communal facilities are used a lot and the residents obviously get on well together, it is assumed that the facilities are the absolute reason for “good coexistence” and for the integration of residents into the housing

community. In any case Sozialbau wants to promote communication and good neighbourliness with these facilities and well-designed communal spaces, whereby fluctuations in use and acceptance are taken in their stride.

Sometimes for residents the number and furnishing of the communal facilities are not only of material significance. They can also be a kind of “unique feature” – something that other housing estates do not have, something that residents can be proud of or that they talk about with their friends. The questions on this:

*How satisfied are you with the facilities on your housing estate: in the buildings, outdoors and as a whole?*

Questions then asked for more precise details of the facilities.

*In detail now: what facilities does your housing estate have, how important are they for you and how do you use them?*

Questions were asked about the importance of facilities as well as about how much residents actually use them because it can be the case that although residents express themselves positively about communal facilities because they greatly contribute to the usability and the image of a housing estate, they are not personally very interested in them (or also vice versa). Facilities were selected which could be assumed to be of great importance for community life.

As communication spaces do they also contribute to “good coexistence”? And to what extent? The answers on this bring somewhat more insight.

#### ► **Satisfaction with the facilities**

The overall balance across all housing estates is thoroughly positive. Almost two thirds of those asked (64 %) said they were on the whole satisfied or very satisfied with the facilities of their housing estate. 67 % were satisfied with the building, slightly fewer (63 %) with the outdoor space. Only very few (10 %) were “not at all satisfied”, more responses were rather “adequate, it’s ok” or “not very satisfied”.

Visits to selected housing estates confirmed this assessment. Standard facilities on Sozialbau housing estates border on the luxurious and are seldom found in expensive, freely-financed housing construction. However, there are fluctuations: satisfaction with the facilities of the housing estate as a whole increases quite considerably on newer

housing estates. For those built from 2000 to 2005 it is still around half, from 2006 it increases to over two thirds and most recently almost to three quarters. Within these levels it is mainly the proportion of those who are “very satisfied” that greatly increases.

Results like this are naturally additionally influenced by a series of factors such as length of residency or phase of life but it can nevertheless evidently be assumed that efforts to continually improve facilities have paid off. They are appreciated.

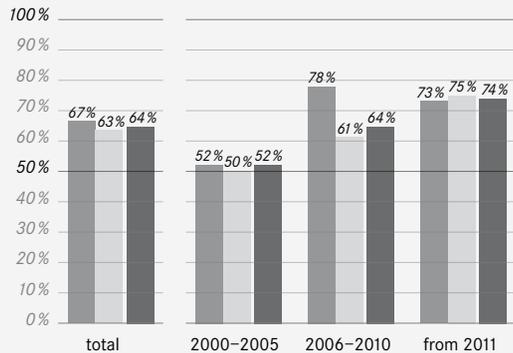
### Satisfaction with the estate's facilities

According to construction period

n = 491

Very satisfied or satisfied

- Indoor
- Outdoor
- Overall



#### ► Importance and degree of use

Simply to add further statements about the importance or degree of use of communal areas and draw conclusions from them would produce a distorted picture because the housing estates have very different sets of facilities. (The only basic facilities that can be compared across all Sozialbau housing estates are the laundry room and the children's playground as well as partly the communal room/play room, because other facilities are only partly to be found.)

If, despite this, a ranking is filtered out of the somewhat complicated data structure to compare, it looks like this:

As seen in the statements from responders, a kind of base which lies around 60 % crystallises with regard to the importance of each facility. With a good two thirds to around 70 % this importance is with the more frequently found facilities: children's play room, communal room, laundry room and children's playground. But – interestingly – facilities that are less often or rarely found (sports cages) are valued even higher and reach a top level of 82 % with a swimming pool. This can mean: whoever has various facilities available consequently rates their importance as quite high. This should also be viewed as interlaced with

answers to the question about what residents would especially point out to friends on a first visit, thus what people are proud of.

Interestingly a positive evaluation of a facility does not include the fact that one actually often uses it. The potential availability of communal facilities also seems to be important, for example, the communal room for occasional use such as a birthday party. The swimming pool, if there is one, is evidently the exception here (fewer answers because not on many estates): those convinced of its importance are also above-average frequent users.

### Importance and use of housing estate facilities

Indoor, if available / Outdoor, if available

n = from 441 (1) to 30 (9)

Indoor facilities	if available, then		
	very important and important	very important	frequently used
Laundry (1)	68 %	33 %	15 %
Children's play room (4)	67 %	25 %	8 %
Community room (3)	67 %	18 %	3 %
Sauna, fitness room (5)	62 %	23 %	14 %

Outdoor facilities	if available, then		
	very important and important	very important	frequently used
Swimming pool, roof terrace (6)	82 %	46 %	43 %
Sports cage (8)	77 %	42 %	14 %
Area for the elderly (7)	73 %	43 %	7 %
Children's playground (2)	71 %	44 %	19 %
Sunbathing lawn/barbecue area (9)	60 %	31 %	13 %

The fact that the breakdown of the – from our perspective positive – overall balance is so differentiated should be no great surprise because every housing estate has its own life. When it is first built it is as a rule younger families with children who move in. Obviously they make intensive use of the laundry room, children's play room and playground. Probably they also do not get too annoyed about other people's children. They grow older, become teenagers, some people move out and others move in. The residential structure of the estate becomes more complex and differentiated. The children's play room loses importance, and so on. In this respect it can in fact be plausible that various communal facilities are regarded as important even if they are less used at times. Could one conclude from this that the communal

facilities do not play a very great role in “good coexistence”? Or that one or the other of them even has a negative effect if it is the origin of a cause for annoyance? If the data is supplemented by impressions gathered on the visits (which happened to take place on very cold autumn days), the picture becomes still more differentiated. There are children’s play rooms which are obviously used and there are others which are just too tidy and appear unused. One can tell from the users’ list of a sauna or a fitness room how much favour they actually find. These too are snapshots.

Looking at the existence and level of use of communal facilities in combination with contacts to neighbours that “go beyond saying good morning” leads to the conclusion that the type and scope of facilities are not necessarily decisive for the very positive result of 70% established for “contacts”. On the other hand the communal facilities prove to be of great importance during certain phases of life and make an important contribution to a general positive rating of the housing estate. It can also be seen that some of the facilities have now come to be regarded as a self-evident standard.

#### ④ **Prospects for special living arrangements**

In our society the number of elderly and also disabled people is increasing. This is why today only disabled-friendly apartments are subsidised, but this is only one aspect of the demands made of housing estates that can be expected to increase in the future. Ageing is a very personal process that is determined by many factors – milieu, social competence, family context, financial possibilities and physical, mental and psychological state. Everyday provision for the elderly or disabled – care, meals, household – is just one thing. It is just as important to develop concepts against the isolation and loneliness associated with ageing and disability. One possibility is to integrate so-called “special living arrangements” into housing estates. It is obvious that this will have effects on life together as a whole. At this point “good coexistence” shows itself in a very special way.

On some housing estates Sozialbau has therefore been increasingly cooperating with social welfare institutions. There is housing provision and out-patients’ service and counselling services. Sozialbau thus wants to promote the integration of people with special needs – a contribution to the realisation of the demand for inclusion. Two questions were therefore asked:

*If there were special living arrangements or out-patients' facilities on your estate, would you take a positive view?*

*Do you see personal benefit to you too?*

On newer Sozialbau housing estates there are so far only rare special living arrangements and counselling services. Within the most representative selection for the survey there was only one special living arrangement, a pensioners' flat-sharing community. All the residents who responded there find it good. However, on the other housing estates knowledge of and/or interest in the subject must still be low – only a good third of all responders gave clear answers. But among them the overwhelming majority of 88 % see special living arrangements and out-patients' facilities on the estate as positive. More than half of those who answered also see a personal benefit in the potential integration of special living arrangements (those who gave concrete answers here were obviously also those who commented on the previous question). Both with “positive” and “personal benefit” the approval rates are higher with increasing age of those answering, with the highest rates for both in the group of 50 to 65 years old. It can be supposed that these are residents who have already been confronted with the problems of ageing or disablement of people close to them. With the most elderly there is evidently once again more scepticism.

*Only one third of all responders answered clearly*

In summary, no rejection is to be seen of elderly or disabled people or others who have different special needs. The fact that there is such wide approval is an indicator that should be judged positively for “good coexistence”.

## ⑤ The caretakers

The area of responsibility of caretakers has increasingly moved towards social-psychological care. There is a good reason why every Sozialbau housing estate has a picture of the caretaker on its noticeboard. Most of the newer estates are looked after by a caretaker and in parallel by a cleaning company. Today's caretaker has replaced the previous “janitor” (“Hausbesorger”, who was directly employed by the company and usually provided with a company flat). He or she has a contractual relationship with the housing company. Depending on the situation s/he takes care of one or more estates and can sometimes live on one of them but this is no precondition.

*Field of responsibility has moved towards social-psychological care*

Sozialbau has already been training caretakers for their jobs for a long time. High social competence is indispensable because they have to be able to deal with many different and ambivalent opinions. In this survey residents were asked whether they rate their caretaker as competent – without having defined competence more closely – and on what matters, besides the usual, they had contacted the caretaker more often (various matters were given to select). This question was intentionally put after those about contacts, disturbance, annoyance and problems and lastly about satisfaction with conflict solution. In addition, the caretakers of the representatively selected housing estates were asked to fill out a written questionnaire and they were also directly questioned in interviews on each of the four estates in order to do as much justice as possible to the structures and interactions on the estates. The questions to residents were:

*Do you consider your caretaker to be sufficiently competent?*

*Apart from for usual reasons, have you contacted this caretaker more often about special concerns?*

*If yes, what was it mainly about?*

The fact that only around 60 % of residents – in a cross section of the estates – attest that their caretaker is sufficiently competent for the job and another fifth are undecided, does not really appear justified when on visits one sees the appearance of the estates and how they are looked after. However, some comparable satisfaction levels indicate that this evaluation of caretakers cannot be read in isolation, but only in the overall context with other results.

Statements about satisfaction with the estate facilities and also with the performance of the housing management across various fields of work always lie in a similar range – between around 60 % and two thirds. This gradually crystallises as a certain general “base of satisfaction”. It should be borne in mind that the level of satisfaction with conflict resolution lies far below this (see remarks about “annoyance” in this section). This is also put into perspective by the fact that in opinion polls a not insubstantial proportion of responders fall back on a “don’t know” or “maybe”. Taking up a position does not always come easy for some residents.

Certain differences are still visible according to the age and to a small extent also the size of the estates: competence is denied rather more on older estates (31 %) than on the newer (23 %) or the newest (18 %). The size of an estate only seems to have a small influence on evaluations. At most, it can be seen that the positive view is stronger on

smaller estates with between 101 and 200 flats. In addition, a contradiction immediately appears in answer to the following question about the degree to which caretakers are approached on matters beyond the standard agenda – in fact by two thirds of residents. It is barely imaginable that this always led only to disappointment (perhaps the Viennese mentality knows better how to criticise than to praise). The interviews also showed that migrants too do not hold back with criticism – a sign of acculturation?

The breakdown shows in what matters caretakers are mainly enlisted by residents and on what different levels these matters lie. Mostly it is about the building, courtyard or garden (just over half), then about one's own flat, for example about repairs. Almost a quarter are about other residents, thus about annoyance. Probably often about noise? Obviously more rarely because of the assumption that a neighbour may need help. However, these are assumptions. Nevertheless – and this is an interesting finding – with over 30% the reason for contact with the caretaker is about personal matters. And there seem to be still more other concerns.

As previously mentioned, on visits, one mostly gains the impression of perfectly maintained housing estates, which is why the judgement of caretakers' competence should be to a great extent explained with psychological categories and can be due to the high level of expectation from housing in Vienna – “we're paying for it after all” (negating the high proportion of subsidies used for every estate).

How do the caretakers themselves see their position and role on the housing estate? How do they assess the coexistence of the residents? As mentioned, they were given questionnaires to fill out and interviews were conducted with a few. What they say should be taken in context of their contractual relationship with Sozialbau but nevertheless provides another facet for the overall picture of life together. Incidentally, it looks as if the overwhelming majority of these caretakers are male, mostly between 40 and 50 years old and born Austrians. Some come from other parts of Europe.

The caretakers have comprehensive knowledge of their housing estates and also know what can spark conflicts as well as whether, how and to what degree communal facilities are used. Understandably they stay out of general questions about life on the estate such as about the “mix” or the predominance of ethnicities. And where they make no statement about the question of “annoyance” one can certainly assume that there is annoyance.

A clearer picture can be expected from caretakers with regard to the use of communal facilities. The children's play room is judged to be very important, sometimes more important than the residents

*They also know what can spark conflicts*

themselves think. The communal room is seen as more important on newer estates than on old ones. On visits it could sometimes be seen that caretaker and housing manager also to a certain extent “let things go”, surely for a good reason. In the previously-mentioned transition zones between the flat and the housing community areas, the balconies, the area in front of the flat door, the garden terrace, “highly individual biotopes” develop which a caretaker could certainly act against from a formal point of view. But if it doesn’t disturb the neighbours? Why should he intervene? Thus another indicator for basically “good coexistence”

## ⑥ The authority of the housing management company

The housing management company is responsible for general regulations, as found in the house rules, and for accounting and similar. It must provide “good management”: economical operation, maintenance and supervision of commissioned service firms. This is very important for residents because bad management can have a negative effect on running costs. Annoyance about increased costs can lead to a bad atmosphere. But personal contact with residents is not necessary for all this, what is needed is good information. This is not about personal concerns but matters affecting all residents. This is why some residents would like to see a formal tenants’ association (see the section “Self-organisation”). In any case, in general, residents should be informed as well as possible about matters affecting their housing estate. There are therefore notice-boards on every estate and recently electronic displays have also been installed.

To a certain extent the caretaker is a buffer between the residents and the housing management company. The aim is to settle all matters on the spot. However, the management company is needed when conflicts reach a level of escalation when sanction is unavoidable. It is the authority that issues rules for order and cleanliness and must intervene when necessary. The safety issue also affects the housing management company because it decides on provisions such as intercoms or – something Sozialbau rejects – closing off a housing estate from public space with gates, for example, or installing surveillance cameras. The issue of safety is particularly moulded by fears, past experiences etc. . And what is to be understood by “cleanliness” and “order” diverges according to lifestyle. The questions were:

*The authority that issues the regulations for order and cleanliness*

*Does the housing management company provide satisfactory information?*

*Does the housing management company satisfactorily provide for order and cleanliness, maintenance and safety?*

Satisfaction with the housing management company increases when the questions are not general but go through the important parameters one after another. This more clearly reflects the complexity and also gives differentiated feedback to the company. In the first overview of all four parameters (information, order and cleanliness, maintenance, safety) there was an overall “moderate to good” rating (whereby only few responders did not answer). A majority always rated each category as “very or sufficiently satisfactory” but the range is large, from 80 % for the frontrunner “information” to the others with only below two thirds agreement. The best mark “very satisfied” was only given by less than 20 % per parameter.

However, this result should not be seen too negatively. It is common that people also have reservations about institutions such as housing management companies such as “them up there”, but the picture is put into perspective by the relatively strong positive feedback on many other questions. This should not mean that there is no strong call for further improvement with the interplay of good, prompt work and positive, transparent communication with the inclusion of residents. The caretaker should be seen as a very important communicator, “buffer” and first contact person. This topic can only be seen in the interaction of both.

As stated, 80 % of those questioned are sufficiently or very satisfied with Sozialbau’s information work. The picture will possibly further improve when electronic information screens have been installed on all the housing estates. This will then change still further due to new information media when all age groups are familiar with handling them. Whether and how information is absorbed is also a generational question and depends on how it is presented.

There is less approval for the housing management company’s work in other fields. Only around up to two thirds thought that there was sufficient provision for cleanliness, maintenance and safety. It could be seen that there were clear differences of opinion between the various estates.

However, it is interesting that this picture can in no way be confirmed by visits to 16 selected housing estates. Hardly any traces of dirt or deficient maintenance can be seen – despite a close search. For transitional zones between private and communal areas there are different modes of behaviour which, it can be supposed, can lead to annoyance or to negative perception. These zones are sometimes intensively “privatised”. There are exceptional cases where dangerous

“junk rooms” can be seen which are against fire regulations. Here it is certainly the architectonic design that should be given responsibility.

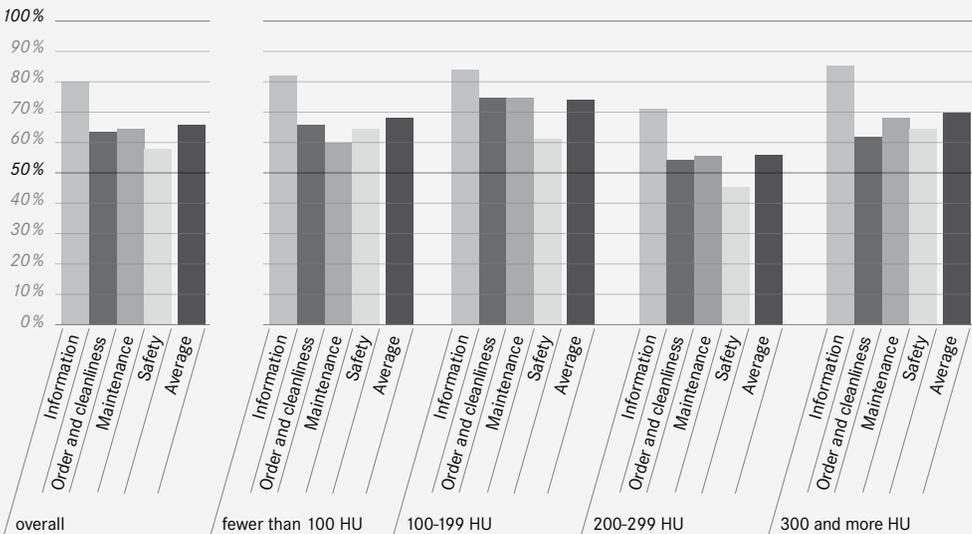
The interviews also showed that the subject of “safety” includes a very wide range of issues. For many people it can mean physical safety, protection against tripping up and getting hurt and similar, or the effects of bad weather and goes as far as protection from crime such as threatening behaviour, theft and burglary. This has to be considered in evaluating the results. It is well-known that, particularly on this issue, emotions and opinions play a major role. Here too, the architectonic planning of housing estates can already be decisive in the preliminary phase with robust and secure design and planning that avoids creating intimidating space. In relation to this, some crass individual negative instances emerged in the survey and on the visits. This can be a significant problem for good housing management.

### Satisfaction with the performance of the housing management company

According to categories and size of the estate

n = 491

very or sufficiently satisfied with ...



It could be possible that great differences in the ages and forms of life of the responding residents are concealed behind the overall values. The demands one makes on the place one lives change with the various phases of life and thus potentially also criticism of the housing management. However, viewing the findings according to age groups

and types of household shows only small differences. The youngest residents are generally the most satisfied, but also those living alone (of different ages). The greatest differences by far can be seen in satisfaction with order and cleanliness (13%). The difference here is especially high between the middle-aged (30 to 50) – the most satisfied – and the oldest age group (66+) – the least satisfied. Order and cleanliness is thus a special concern for the most elderly.

Looking at the various types of households, considerably larger differences can be seen depending on the subject: couples without children and families are notably less satisfied with the management of order and cleanliness than small households (single households and one-parent families), with safety it is once again couples without children. The dividing lines do not run according to “living with or without children”, the picture appears disperse.

If the phase of life is not so decisive for the attitude to the housing management, it could of course be the type of housing estate. And it can clearly be seen – both in regard to size as well as age of the estate. Views are most widely divergent according to the size of the estates – and on all subjects. However, no simple conclusion can be drawn such as increasing or decreasing with the size of the estate. Residents in smaller housing complexes (from 100 to 199 flats) are mostly among the most satisfied, those on estates with 200 to 299 the most dissatisfied. Depending on the age of an estate there are two notable issues: information and – once again – order and cleanliness. “Increasing or decreasing with the age of an estate“ is also not recognisable. Residents on estates built between 2006 and 2010 criticise on above-average levels.

It is evident that in “medium-sized“ or “medium-aged“ housing complexes there are constellations that create discontent. This should be a pointer for the housing management where special attention should be directed.

### ► **Housing estate parties**

The Sozialbau housing management believes that it makes sense to promote community life and therefore organises a residents’ party on the housing estates once a year. Staff and, of course, the caretaker are always there. The questions on this were:

*If there are housing estate parties (summer or winter) organised by the housing community or Sozialbau, do you or some of your family attend?*

The estate parties are “top-down” and therefore routinely well organised. More than half of the residents say they go to these parties at least sometimes – actually a good quota and to be seen positively with a view to “good coexistence”. Not many limited-profit housing companies organise things like this. Self-organised parties and small, relaxed meet-ups also develop on the estates when informal groups and associations have come together. There were only individual cases of this on the estates surveyed.

The parties that have been taking place over many years at the “Global Estate” (see the article on this) are an exceptional example. These parties are organised by the housing community or the residents’ association and therefore have a completely different character. People help and are proud of what they can contribute and explicitly display special cultural features. In any case these parties are a conscious expression of a large majority of residents living well together, which cannot be said so much about the activities organised “top-down”.

## ⑦ Interest in self-organisation

Active participation in the concerns of the housing community is an important indicator for identification with the housing estate and for integration. Whereby the distinction must be made between formal participation – association, elected interest group – and informal participation such as in events, work groups or digital circles.

There must be concrete preconditions for informal participation – the same everyday interests or similar political views. The latter cannot of course be seen on limited-profit housing associations’ estates. Here people are not moving in with the like-minded such as in group housing projects. Social selection mainly takes place via the rent level and the access regulations. However, there are numerous common everyday interests during certain life phases of the residents, especially for families with children.

*Scope for self-organisation is limited in this type of tenancy*

The estates investigated mainly consist of rental flats. With this type of tenancy the scope for self-organisation is limited. There can be no participation at all in business matters (beneath the Sozialbau umbrella there are also cooperatives with their own statutes in which opportunities for participation are regulated – see Ludl and Weiland, in this publication). Nevertheless, as can be seen from the example of the “Global Estate”, Sozialbau provides scope for self-organisation such as in the use of communal rooms. Today – even across the generations –

participation has of course to a great extent moved from the face-to-face to the virtual and into social media forums.

Another aspect is the tenants' association that represents the interests of the tenants with regard to Sozialbau. This form of self-organisation is naturally based on the assumption that there are wishes or concerns which people think can only be addressed to the housing association in an organised way. With cooperatives there is the function of "tenants' delegates".

Self-organisation can play a great role in "good coexistence", whereby the non-formalised form is probably more important because it is not about decisions and delegates but about concrete action.

*Does your housing estate have the following: residents' association (informal), internet residents' forum, tenants' representation (formal)? If not, would you welcome them?*

*Would you like to participate more in decision-making?*

The answers to the question as to whether residents would welcome various types of formal and informal participation in the concerns of their housing estate produced a diffuse picture of indecision and a lack of information. In contrast to most other issues somewhat fewer residents also answered here (between 85 % and 90 %). More than half of those answering the general question of whether more participation in decision-making was desirable said yes. Adding the somewhat undecided brings the figure up to 84 % of residents – a very high level, also taking into account somewhat fewer answers.

But what kind of participation? The lack of clarity about the possible existence of opportunities for participation should first be mentioned because there were often even different answers on one and the same estate. This also means that even if a certain form of participation already exists, word has not got around everywhere. Presumably, especially on newer estates, there are hardly any residents' associations. Only a quarter answered the question of a possible residents' association decidedly positively. Another 40 % were undecided – "don't know", "maybe" – a good third rejected the idea. However, "in favour" and "perhaps" added together nevertheless make up two thirds.

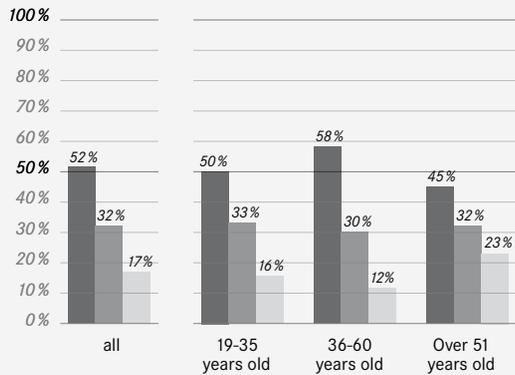
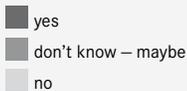
It seems most likely that in future there will be more residents' internet forums on Sozialbau housing estates. A fifth of residents think that something like this already exists. Hardly anybody on the older estates but on those built from 2006 – on the "middle-aged" estates (2006–2010) the figure is even 38 % of those answering. Nevertheless, among those who are not involved, many still do not have much idea

about it. Only one fifth want such a platform, many are undecided and three out of ten residents do not want one. This does in any case mean a doubling of those already involved (mainly Austrians).

### Would like more participation in decision-making

According to residents' age

n = 425



The question of tenants' representation looks different. There are more answers and they are clearer – although it happens that residents in one and the same building think there is tenants' representation while others say the opposite. In fact there might be tenants' representation on 11 % of estates, mostly on the older estates (from 2000 to 2005) with 15 %. These figures point to cooperatives that have an appropriate statute. There is more than 40 % approval for setting up tenants' representation, adding the “maybes” brings it to over 80 %. It is evidently the rather more “formal” types of participation that arouse interest. This points to the need to negotiate certain concrete concerns with the housing management, in fact “coexistence”.

Another look at the age of residents answering is interesting. It is not surprising that over 65 year-olds probably live on estates where such organisations are most seldom found, but where there is also the least interest. All the age groups below 55 show themselves noticeably more interested. An example: only less than 10 % of over 65 year-olds are interested in an “association” but 23-28 % of the others. On the other hand it cannot be claimed that interest increases with younger respondents. Not even on the subject of the internet, where the quotas move in similar ranges. A clear target group only appeared in the question of more opportunities for participation: on average it is just over half in favour but in the 36 to 50 age group it is almost 60 %.

What can these statements mean for the question of “good coexistence”? The lack of information can certainly not only be blamed on those supposed to provide it because with today's opportunities to get

informed it is up to the recipient to act. Considering the high quota in the question about neighbourly contacts, which is also a significant indicator of “good coexistence”, organised communication obviously does not seem to be an issue that is much discussed. Since the residents are not involved in many cultural activities together, some ask themselves, “What’s the point of an association?” Children’s parties or a bring-and-buy sale can also be simply organised informally. An internet forum may still be unfamiliar for some residents and those who are already active in forums and on Facebook will perhaps hardly visit a housing community forum. But representation – clearly towards the Sozialbau housing management company, who else? – does meet with approval. However, taking part in it is obviously open to question.

*Organised communication is not much discussed*

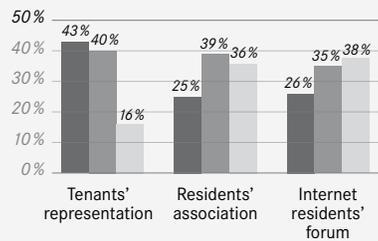
A positive factor is that it is obviously not only the youngest residents who want to be active – on the contrary. they often have small children and are kept fully busy with all the things they have to do. Many residents, across all the age groups (apart from the most elderly), are informed, motivated and also express their opinions. It is a question of unlocking this potential (see the chapter “The Key Issue of Framework Conditions”).

### Opinions on self-organised bodies

n = 398/343/412

What do you think of ...?

- would be good
- don't know – maybe
- unnecessary



## ⑧ Significance of the local area

Can one feel fully integrated on a housing estate and can life there be very good if one cannot also feel the same about the local area? Do residents like the area into which they have moved and is there an interrelationship between the assessment of the local area and that of the housing estate?

Sozialbau has built housing estates in most districts of Vienna and in different kinds of areas. The decision of limited-profit housing

companies about where they invest in Vienna is not only the result of a particular targeted housing estate strategy (e.g. avoiding widely spread housing for organisational reasons, avoiding quarters which do not have such a good reputation etc.) but they must also build where residential building land is available, e.g. via a building developer competition. Affordable building land has become rare. In selecting the 16 housing estates for this study the location in an urban area was a criterion insofar that the spectrum of the 69 estates built during the study period should also be reflected.

*The quality of the location is a central aspect*

A housing estate is not an isolated microcosm but part of a wider urban context. The evaluation of one's own housing estate is – in whatever way – certainly also influenced by the local surroundings or urban quarter. The image of an estate and that of the district or the local surroundings determine one another. The type of location quality is a central aspect for feeling proud and thus also satisfied with where one lives – and consequently also for “good coexistence”.

With every move people want to improve their housing situation and the quality of the local area is also part of this. It makes a decisive contribution to dealing with everyday life, which differs according to the current social situation of the residents: shops, doctors, nursery schools etc. depending on one's needs at the time. Young families ask about nursery schools, the elderly want good medical and social provisions nearby. Working people who leave home in the morning and return in the evening and do their shopping somewhere along the way are probably less interested in local shops than a young family with small children. Above all, access to the public transport network as well as being near a park or other green space are important issues.

As the statistics in this study show however, deficiencies in the previous flat plus personal concerns were a reason to move house. Dissatisfaction with the local area played a considerably smaller part. Today it is no longer the case that a close circle of friends or relatives live nearby. The qualities of a housing location lie in those of its surroundings – urban or suburban – in the “milieu” and in its spatial and aesthetic characteristics.

*Social groups which accelerate a downward trend*

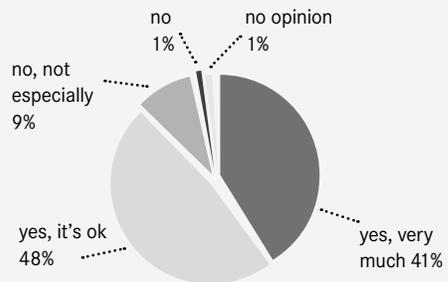
In the evaluation of a local area a role is also played by the fact that a structural change can take place – especially in those districts near the centre. This also has an effect on the housing estate which can be felt as positive or negative. An urban quarter can experience gentrification or social groups can move in which accelerate a downward trend. Upgrading can lead to more variety but also to higher housing and living costs. A downward trend can result in those who have lived longer in the area feeling like strangers. The question:

## *Do you like the local neighbourhood where you live?*

Not only housing estates of different ages and sizes were chosen for this study but also explicitly those in districts with different structures. In view of the fact that the qualities of the various local areas could hardly have been more different, the result is very positive in cross section: altogether 89 % of responders say “yes, we like our local area very much” or “we find it okay” (the highest and other positive rates of approval around half-half). With no other question was there such a high positive evaluation.

### **Do you like your local area?**

n = 492



Nevertheless, among those who like their local area there are some differences from estate to estate. Why? Here it makes sense firstly to look at the type of location, i.e. what parts of the urban area the estates are allocated to. It should be taken into account that three types of location, “South, Transdanubia, other (mainly West)” each include groups of districts, which means that the specific location of the selected estates (old housing stock area, periphery etc.) is not applicable. As could be expected, this comparison shows almost no differences in evaluation of the local area. However, another analysis according to distance from the city centre shows more distant locations with nearby open country to be the winners – despite the comparatively unfavourable connection to the city. People are certainly proud of the privilege of living in a green area. This evaluation can change over the course of people’s lives such as when the children have grown up.

A look at the age of the estates gives further indications. In comparison to the oldest, first occupied 10 to 15 years ago, where positive evaluation of the local area is 83 %, on all newer estates it is considerably higher with over 90 %. Furthermore, there seems to be a familiarity effect: the older the residents, the more often they say, “Yes, I like it very much.” But this all still does not explain the differences in the evaluations of the individual estates.

For example, on the one hand a negative evaluation can be seen in a part of a district strongly characterised by migration, where the judgement of the surroundings probably has an effect on that of the estate. But on the other hand it is also noticeable that an area far from the centre with many council housing estates is far more negatively rated than many others. It can be supposed that further such cases can be found among the large number of newer Sozialbau housing estates.

*The “relevance  
of the location”  
can be seen*

To what extent does this liking for the local area affect identification with the housing estate itself? To the question, “When you have visitors who don’t yet know your housing situation, what in particular do you point out to them?” interviewees mentioned the closer and more distant surroundings in first place. The “relevance of the location” can thus be seen. In order to avoid too hasty assessments deeper analyses on the basis of case examples were in any case needed. Available detailed, current analyses of city areas could be used for comparison (see, for example, Stadt Wien (Municipality of Vienna), 2016).

If one attempts to apply criteria such as closeness to shops, to the nearest bus or tram stop or U-Bahn station, to parks or green areas – measurable parameters – to the evaluation of housing estate location, it is possible that the evaluations are different to those of the residents themselves. The decision to live in a certain area also has a bearing on self-esteem. In housing, choosing an address is already the beginning of finding acceptance. Negative effects on advancement as a result of an address in an area with a bad reputation are known but not especially pronounced in Vienna. However, those asked obviously regard very many parts of this city to be “good areas”.

This also means that it is generally important for individuals to have the possibility to choose. However, the survey shows that it was relatively easy to find something suitable in Vienna. And now too, even on the currently pressurised Vienna housing market, in a certain range there are opportunities for choice, at least in the limited-profit sector. We thus see the fact that those asked expressed themselves so positively about their local area as a positive sign for “good coexistence”.

## Ethnic dimensions of coexistence

People wish for “good coexistence” on all housing estates and therefore in the first instance it has nothing to do with ethnicity. It is made up of small everyday things: contact with the neighbours, annoyance, the competence of the caretaker etc. . The diversity connected with migration can however make additional demands on coexistence.

Questions relating to interethnic coexistence closely touch upon individuals’ personalities – in contrast to general questions. Answers to even very simple questions of opinion and perception of interethnic coexistence are influenced by individuals’ lives. But the majority of people were also willing to answer personal questions. The overview gives a picture that is close to reality.

It should be pointed out again: the proportions of responders in the survey do not reflect the actual proportions of people of different origins on the housing estates. As mentioned previously, answering a written questionnaire requires familiarity with the German language. It can therefore be supposed that migrants – especially those who have not been in the country for very long – are under-represented in the group of responders.

*Migrants under-represented in the group of responders*

However, the now much increased high proportion of migrant households is at least represented in the results because participants were around two thirds “Austrian since birth” and at least one third people “with migration history” of different kinds. Most of the latter have already been Austrian citizens for more than ten years.

### ① Interethnic contacts

As previously reported, a clear majority of responders had contacts with their neighbours which “go beyond saying hello”. Simple greeting is still not an indicator for “good coexistence”, at least not an especially ambitious one. The question implies that certain forms of communication are such a matter of course that they do not actually need mentioning. Nevertheless, both contacts based on politeness and those that include more are encounters that are also determined by reciprocal judgements. Contacts between people are an exchange of information based on societal codings, of certain gestures that are generally accepted as politeness, acknowledgement or rejection. Everything we show the outside world, from our clothes to our movements, is information for the others who will judge according to their own attitudes.

*Even the same or similar codings are differently interpreted*

Every culture develops its specific forms of such everyday communication. Even the same or similar codings are therefore often interpreted differently. Also social groups who want to segregate themselves from others explicitly look for their own forms of communication. So-called “parallel societies” are characterised by the use of specific signs that only members understand. Children and teenagers also often want to find their identity. There are thus hurdles for contacts that “go beyond saying hello”.

According to a survey as part of the “Zuwanderer-Monitoring” (Migrant Monitoring) study (Verwiebe et al., 2015) 96 % of all Viennese have contact with migrants in everyday life – clear, because they do many jobs in the city, in some sectors they are even dominant. It is obvious that people get used to each other in this framework. However, it does appear that some Austrians show a lack of respect when, according to the monitoring, 31 % of migrants report discrimination in various areas of life, in flat-seeking or in public space (for more about mutual respect see below in this report). Germans (currently Austria’s largest migrant group) are at the top of the sympathy scale because to a large extent they have the same culture and form of life as Austrians. Russians, Turks and people from Africa and the Middle East are at the bottom of the scale.

*Closer contacts are easier when neighbours have the same interests*

It is claimed that migrants primarily have closer contact with their fellow countrymen. On the housing estates of limited-profit companies the migrant residents presumably orient themselves more strongly than those in municipal housing towards local conventions or middle-class forms of everyday interaction, because access to this segment is rather open to the upwardly mobile, usually of the second generation. The hurdles to closer contact that must be overcome are therefore not so high. However, if migrants on a housing estate predominantly maintain their own specific forms of communication (e.g. speaking their own language in the presence of others who do not understand), meetings and conversation are certainly made more difficult. Closer contacts are easier to build and maintain when neighbours have the same interests due to their social situation, such as because of the children or when people look for conviviality or exchange services. Greater closeness requires a certain basic mutual trust.

The questionnaire was on the one hand looking for answers relating to all the residents and on the other specifically investigating coexistence between Austrians and migrants. Two questions were relevant here:

*Do you have contacts with your neighbours that “go beyond saying hello”?*

*Does that also include neighbours of a different origin?*

Because it is well-known that among themselves children are often more spontaneous and more “natural” –thus uninfluenced by certain codings – and overcome barriers more easily and furthermore are also catalysts for contacts between adults, there came the more detailed question:

*And if you have children living with you, do they have contact with children of a different origin on the estate?*

It should be taken into account that this subject is in no way only a matter of relationships between Austrians and migrants but that a wider framework is addressed. As the questions about the variety of residents according to country of origin show (see the chapter “Ethnic visibility”), the housing estates are now home to a diverse range of intercultural and social encounters. In these answers it is thus also about the life together of various non-Austrian residents.

*A wider  
framework is  
addressed*

As described in the chapter “Contacts”, the contact density is generally relatively high – a good seven out of ten residents state that they maintain contacts in their building. Out of these again a good 70 % said that they also include neighbours of a different origin. Reasons for the 30 % of residents who do not could lie in avoidance – by one side or by both – but could also simply be that very few migrants live on the estate. It should be further noted – and this applies to contacts in general – that these evidently often only include neighbours on the same staircase or corridor. This statement by an Austrian in an interview points to this, “There are only Austrians on my staircase.” If an Austrian resident seldom or never makes use of the communal facilities, it is actually possible to live without coming into daily contact with migrants.

Closer encounters can only develop through everyday life. The communication areas that are part of the buildings (stairway, corridors, arcades etc.) on the newer Sozialbau estates are in fact different. Some of them are attractive while others are purely functional.

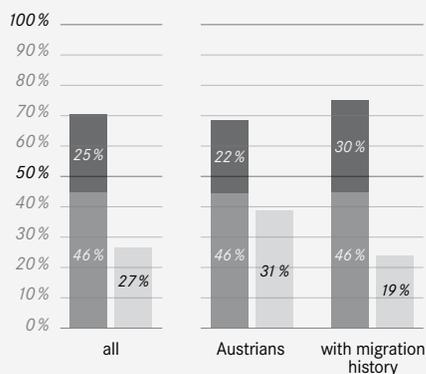
From the above information it can be stated that of all responders in total around half of them maintain interethnic contacts (which “go beyond saying hello”). People with a migration history are more open to contacts than Austrians, 80 % compared to 65 %, against this only 12 % (compared to 28 %) explicitly state that they have “no contact”. Families with children, overall the most open to contacts, are equally represented in both groups so this does not distort the findings.

The differences are small on the various estates. There is evidently somewhat more interethnic contact on the newer estates, on the older estates there is more frequently silence on this topic. Social encounters are mostly also common on estates of various sizes. Estates with 100 to 199 flats could be mentioned as having the most frequent encounters. With regard to interethnic contacts among children, understandably only the small proportion who have to do with children answered this question. Among them around six out of ten confirmed interethnic contacts. On the newer estates it is slightly more – perhaps also because the youngest children live there and “the sand-pit brings people together”. On the older estates, where the young children who moved in are now teenagers, the rate is average.

### Neighbourly contacts that go beyond saying “good morning”

According to origin  
n = 498

- more than 5 contacts
- fewer contacts
- no contacts



All of these are indications that when evaluating coexistence the respective “phase of life” of an estate must be taken into consideration. Another reminder: these can be both contacts between Austrians and migrants as well as between different migrant groups. Migrants as a whole have slightly above average children’s contacts. This confirms the experience that children know less of the ethnic barriers that often handicap adults. They have not yet had as much opportunity to form prejudices and they approach each other more impartially. Parents obviously do not prevent this. In an interview a more elderly Austrian woman answered the question of whether children of different ethnicities meet: “Yes. When my grand-daughter is here, that’s really nice, she goes down to the courtyard to swap stickers. The children like each other and want to join in play. They’re cleverer than the parents.” Another interviewee reported an observation that applies to the local area: “Whether children have contacts depends on the area, the school, the kindergarten.” When children grow older and begin

to leave the territory of the housing estate new relationship networks emerge.

The other side of things should also not go unmentioned: annoyance. Migrants express themselves less on the subject than Austrians who have had “more frequent annoyance with other residents” (54 % compared to 64 %). Can we conclude that this could also partly be about conflicts between Austrians? Or is the perception different? Much is possible. The main reasons for annoyance – noise, cleanliness and the behaviour of children and teenagers – are mentioned by both groups to the same extent, and annoyance about children is even notably higher among migrants (the answers evidently referred to complaints and less to differences in attitude).

## ② Ethnic visibility

### ► *Perceptions and symbols*

Residents' life together is, as sketched, mainly influenced by everyday encounters. Whenever people meet they react to “distinguishing features” that they judge in fractions of a second against the background of a preconceived opinion. Each looks at the other with a preconceived picture. This fact is often negatively connoted but without experience to fall back upon about how another person will behave in an encounter, life would be considerably more difficult. On the other hand preconceptions can negatively affect any kind of communication from the start. Prejudices are formed at societal level but their effects can be serious for coexistence on a housing estate.

*When people meet they react to “distinguishing features”*

This is certainly not only an ethnicity-specific matter. One can also have many preconceptions about people of one's own ethnicity or even one's own social group. But migrants from countries with unfamiliar cultures are confronted with more sweeping judgements due to their appearance, their clothing and their own forms of communication – Austrians and other Europeans perhaps to a lesser extent. Every culture expresses itself in symbols: signs, words, concepts, habits, clothing, objects and procedures. During the course of integration, a reciprocal process – here we are expressly not talking about assimilation – symbols can lose their meanings, mixtures can occur, such as in language. Getting used to something or getting to know it better can also make differences insignificant.

The perception of foreign characteristics is also determined by general sentiments in the globalised media world – sentiments that

are carried onto housing estates by many channels. Religions have the largest wealth of symbols, often a core of cultural identity that can go as far as stipulations about haircuts. The kipa, the headscarf, the veil, certain types of beard, trousers, coat – much is influenced by religion. As a result of secular processes in Austria religious symbols have largely lost their significance in building identity – in contrast to many migrants. On the whole every question about the coexistence of residents of different ethnicity moves in a very complex psychological context.

In order to trace “ethnic visibility” on the housing estates, the attempt was made to show statements on the perception of the respective degree of interethnic coexistence and of the forms of expression of other cultures in an overview. The first question was about the residents’ impressions of diversity. This is condensed through viewing the assessment of religions. An informal double-check was only possible by data analysis of the origin of responders, which could be seen on estates (including looking at the names on intercoms) and partly through contact with interviewees. The first question:

*How many countries do the residents on your housing estate come from, what do you think?*

(Answers offered: from less than 5 countries, from 5 to 10 countries, from more than 10 countries, don’t know.)

This should show whether residents themselves form a picture of the social context in which they live. Verification of the answers was, as explained above, not possible but it was possible to estimate the actual average proportion of Austrians and migrants. Indicators show that since 2000 the level has tended to be around 50%, even if with some large variance.

Are the residents aware of this? Is ethnic diversity even noticed? This is about an opinion, a feeling, but not without significance with a view to “good coexistence”. Do people find it good or a matter of course that many ethnicities are present on the housing estate? Or do they feel “surrounded by foreigners”? Do migrants see things differently to Austrians?

Half of responders estimate that 5 to 10 ethnicities live on their housing estate, 30% think it is more than 10 (10% are unsure). It is noteworthy that the elderly have most difficulty with the estimation. The small minority of those answering who think it is only less than 5 must be closing their eyes on the subject. Responders with a migration background rather tend to suppose a greater number of ethnicities. This can be for the widest range of reasons: they can tell differences

more easily, are more sensitive to the issue or simply live on estates with a greater “mix”.

Differences according to type of estate also point to this: the larger the housing estate, the more residents tend to suppose a higher number of countries of origin. This can obviously be accounted for by reality. On estates with over 200 flats 40 % of those questioned estimated “more than 10 ethnicities”. Understandably, estimates on smaller housing complexes are considerably lower, but here too a majority – two thirds – suppose there are 5 to 10 nationalities represented in the building. Estimates even fluctuate on the individual housing estates. There are estates with conclusive estimates and others where they diverge quite considerably.

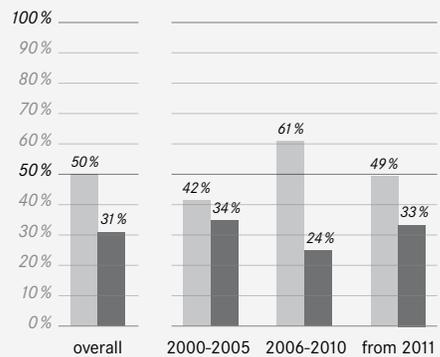
On estates from different construction periods the opinion is also predominant that 5 to 10 nations are represented among the residents. The most sure are residents of estates first occupied 6 to 10 years ago (over 60 %). On the oldest (10 to 16 years) and the newest, one sees “many countries of origin” considerably more frequently (33-34 % as against 24 %). Attitudes to “high diversity” will be examined in another chapter.

### Assessment of residents’ origins on the housing estate

According to construction period

n = 495

from 5 to 10 countries  
 from more than 10 countries



#### ► Different religions

The question about religions is another way to find out what diversity residents perceive on their housing estates because, as mentioned, symbols are to a large extent moulded by religion.

*Which religions do you think are represented among the residents on your housing estate?*

Those who answered mostly supposed that Christian denominations (catholic and/or protestant, orthodox) as well as Islam were represented on the estate (a good 70 % in each case). Still a good 40 % were of the opinion that far-eastern religions were practiced. A fifth even thought that there were other religions represented. The estimation with regard to people without religion must have been rather difficult, this was marked by approx. 40 %.

It was interesting to discover who gave us these estimates. Some of the statistical data of responders are known and furthermore a discrete question about their own religion was put. Despite the assurance of absolute anonymity only around half were prepared to answer and so the picture remains unclear. It can only be said that out of these a good 70 % declared themselves to be Christian, almost 20 % as “no religion“ and not even 10 % as Muslim. Although, as often mentioned, we see at least 44 % of people “with migration background”, among them perhaps only one fifth are Muslim. This shows that the described estimations and perceptions of “ethnic visibility” with regard to Muslims mostly come from non-Muslims. This must be taken into consideration. The image that residents have of the spectrum of faiths – and thereby cultures –represented on their housing estates thus shows that most see the whole spectrum represented, with similar weight both on the Christian as well as the Muslim religion.

### ► **Signs, symbols and customs**

Ethnic signs (e.g. national dress, writing system), symbols (e.g. national colours) and customs (festivals, processions etc.) can be both of purely ethnic origin, thus secular, or also be moulded by a religion: ultimately the two often indivisibly merge. Customs and symbolic languages, especially from southern or far-eastern countries, are welcomed to our cities as an enrichment. A carnival of cultures. New festivals. Great variety of goods. However, there are also customs that meet with disapproval. Not everything is unambiguous.

*A carnival of cultures, new festivals, wide variety of goods*

There is no question about the fact that migrants should be able to celebrate their customs in public as long as they are within the limits of the law. This also applies to housing estates. If this was not the case, residents would have to retreat into their private space and hide their religious symbols. If the Jewish citizen had to take off his kipa, the Sikh his turban when leaving their flats, one could scarcely speak of “good coexistence”. In fact suspicion would even arise if customs were removed to a back room.

On the “Global Estate” it is taken for granted that the “international” is present in everyday life beyond the headscarf. A folk-dancing group meets in the community room, weddings are celebrated with traditions from different countries and the fast-breaking of Ramadan and much more all take place. It is now interesting whether such community cultural diversity is maintained as a matter of course and without causing a stir on Sozialbau housing estates built since then which were not model projects. Here can be seen a good indication of “good coexistence”: respect towards others and enrichment through diversity. The question as to symbols, signs and customs was introduced on the questionnaire: “In our society everyone is able to celebrate their customs and their religion openly within the limits of the law, and so also on housing estates.” (There was thus no detailed definition of all the things that could be included under the term “customs”.)

*Do residents on your housing estate openly wear symbols of their culture and religion? Headscarf, veil, kipa, turban, cross or others? A few or many?*

And:

*Do you see particular customs of various nationalities on your housing estate? Here too: a few or many?*

There are numerous positive answers to the question of whether symbolic clothing is noticed. On average more than three quarters say they notice. The focus is clearly on individual cases. To put it bluntly, talk is de facto only about the Muslims’ headscarf and at most the veil. This was concluded from the interviews. The level is considerably lower on the question of customs. Fewer than half said that they noticed (45 % “yes, a few” or “yes, a lot”) but this is still a relevant level. One third do not notice them on the estate, while every fifth respondent is uncertain about the answer. Mostly little is seen or heard of them. On this point it is obvious that it is not the customs of Austrians that are meant but only those of migrants.

There are differences in perception both with symbols and with customs depending upon who one is and where one lives. With both, the reality is variously perceived depending upon personal background. With regard to symbols, for example, Austrians and people with migration background have similar opinions, the latter see “many dressed like that on the estate” somewhat more frequently. However, they tend to perceive customs rather more than Austrians (52 % compared to 42 %; here just as frequently “a lot dressed like that”). The question arises as

*Differences in perception both of symbols and of cultures*

to whether all this rather has to do with different sensitivities or with a specific housing situation.

Perhaps differences according to the types of estate? According to construction period they are not serious. There is a tendency that there is still the least perception on the oldest estates (10 to 16 years old) both of symbols as well as customs. On the whole, the assessment that there are only “a few” is relatively clearly predominant.

*What diversity  
is noticed by  
residents?*

However, with a certain logic the size of an estate has an influence to some degree. From about 100 flats a majority begin to notice. Here it is still predominantly individuals that are noticed. At around 200 to 300 flats the “diversity” clearly seems to be the greatest. On the largest estates it is on the whole noticeably less. Could this be because “smaller circles” form here once again? However, there are also housing estates with greatly varying opinions.

Maintaining customs with folk-dancing groups or similar seems to play no large role – this was confirmed in the interviews. There have certainly been weddings with ethnic customs from time to time, parties in the community rooms – on the part of Austrians as well as migrants. But: “You hear things from the flats” – perhaps an indication that migrants rather have their parties in their flats and not in the semi-public sphere of the building.

Some answers in the interviews reveal how what is currently “in the air”, is coming onto the housing estates.

An Austrian woman:

*“You see it more and more. I’ve got a critical attitude to Islam. Some of them are dangerous, Salafis, Wahhabis. They’re even more raving in the second and third generations.”*

An Austrian woman:

*“I once heard about the end of the Ramadan festival, and once a cry to Allah, like from a muezzin – that shouldn’t be happening.”*

An Austrian man:

*“You see it from the children. There are heaps of them.”*

A migrant:

*“They should do what they want within their own four walls.”*

An Austrian man:

*“Right across the board. There are also lesbians and homos.”*

Manifestations of interethnic life together in the communal indoor and outdoor areas of housing estates do nevertheless exist, even if to a limited extent. They are evidently both an expression as well as the background of the estimations of the diversity of nationalities or religious faiths. The nationality question also shows moderate but increasing diversity. How this is expressed in positive and negative opinions, leads to “preponderances” and where something like limits are desired will be the subject of the following chapter, “The mix”.

### ③ Assessments of “the mix”

Because the proportion of residents with migration background is obviously tending towards 50 % or has already passed this mark on some limited-profit company estates, cultural diversity is basically already an everyday fact. Which of course does not mean that all residents have to find this good. It will also depend which people or groups of migrants are involved, whether they are homogenous or whether several or many ethnicities are represented. If residents, of whatever origin, predominantly preferred to mix with their own, it would not be a good starting point for “good coexistence” on the housing estates that now in fact have a mix of residents.

*Cultural diversity  
is already an  
everyday fact*

The previous chapter traced the estimations of the variety of origins and ethnically influenced lifestyles to be found among the residents. Now we turn to attitudes to them – what is the opinion on a variety of origins, are preponderances seen, how they are evaluated and what do people think would be a potential successful “mix”.

*Do you basically find it a good thing that residents from  
many countries live on your housing estate?*

The answers to the estimated number of countries from which other residents come reinforce the assumption of an average, mainly medium-sized “mix” according to origin. To a certain extent a wider range of countries of origin, with more than 10 ethnicities, can be supposed here and there – larger estates are predestined for this. It can be assumed that the spectrum of those interested in this market segment has become wider and more varied in recent years. This can be seen from the residents on the new estates as well as new tenancies in considerably older housing stock. Other sources point to a proportion of 50-50 between Austrians and migrants in subsidised housing that has now often already been reached.

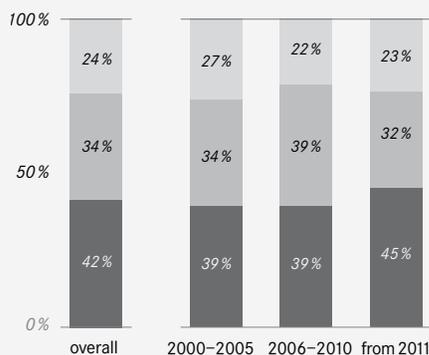
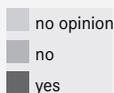
The answers analysed here on people's attitudes to such a mix could show acceptance or reservation. However, firstly it is revealing that a quarter of those asked expressed no opinion. In view of the often already reached proportion of 50-50, the conclusion suggests itself that a not insignificant percentage do not want to be confronted with this question. The fact that there were appreciably more migrants (29 %) than Austrians (21 %) among those who did not answer could be an indication for undefined worries or fears.

### Basic opinion on ethnic diversity

according to construction period

n = 493

Question: "Is it basically a good thing that residents from many countries live on your housing estate?"



Agreement that a variety of countries of origin is a good thing predominates with 42 % approval and 34 % answering negatively. In view of the fact that basic normative answers could be expected to this question (who wants to express disagreement?), this result should certainly be critically evaluated with a view to "good coexistence". In any case it provides an impression of the mood. On closer inspection it can be stated that on the analysed estates built from 2000, although Austrians find cultural diversity relatively good (approx. 40 %), those with migration background answering find it even better (almost half). Nevertheless there are also more of the latter who do not answer (see above). The age of residents is also relevant. The younger they are, the more they approve of cultural diversity (46 %). Half of the most elderly residents (over 65 years old) disapprove and 38 % of older residents (51 to 65 years old) are not in favour of diversity.

*The younger the residents, the more they approve of diversity*

The differences in attitudes are not however only based on personal reasons, the housing situation also has a large influence. Approval is high on the newer estates because it is rather younger people who live on them. Residents who do not appreciate diversity are more to be found on estates that have been occupied for 6 to 10 years. And there is a small predominance of the undecided on the oldest estates.

It cannot be said that preferences change positively or negatively in a linear way with an increasing number of flats on a housing estate. There are considerable differences according to the type of estate: on one more than half approving of diversity (100-199 flats), in another case only just over 30 % (200-299 flats).

Influential factors other than size must be in play here. Among the individual estates included as examples there are also some with considerably above-average negative ratings. On the other hand no noteworthy differences can be seen with regard to location in the city.

These results are certainly plausible. A very simplified conclusion would be: younger people on rather more small-scale housing estates most approve of diversity, in general a migration background also seems to be decisive. Then came the more concrete question:

*Do you think that individual nationalities are too predominant on your estate?*

*If so, which ones? (free answers)*

*And how is that expressed, in your opinion? (free answers)*

It was thus not only aiming to trace the presence of dominant nationalities but also the evaluation aspect. It is clear that with “too great a predominance” of a nationality it was not Austrians who were meant – there were no misunderstandings in this respect. It was just as clear that the group of German migrants, currently the largest in Austria, was not so much meant, nor people from other western EU countries. Earlier surveys plausibly showed that “both sides”, Austrians and those with migration background, do not want one particular group of migrants to predominate.

A possible reservation with regard to the dominance of one group could also lie in the fact that ambitious migrants tend culturally to distance themselves increasingly from their own ethnic group. As with the previous question about attitudes to diversity, a larger proportion, a good fifth of those asked did not want to express an opinion here either – which can certainly be interpreted as uncertainty about their own attitude.

Opinions are balanced among those answering: almost 4 out of 10 (39 %) see “too great a predominance” and another 4 out of 10 do not see too great a dominance (or do not see it as negative if there is one). Austrians more often see a dominance of individual nationalities, migrants less often, as can be expected, but they also see it. They tend to hold themselves back from answering this question. The older that residents

are, the more likely they are to see a predominance: those over 50 years old around 44 %, the youngest only 33 %.

This can also of course depend on where most of them live. The size of an estate obviously plays a certain part. In comparison to the overall average of 39 %, opinions that there is a – negatively evaluated – predominance are only above average on the larger estates (from 200 flats). (On estates with 200-299 flats almost half, with 46 %, were of this opinion.)

*Individual phenomena are possible on certain estates*

However, no great difference could be detected according to the age of the estates. A possible interpretation is that the groups of residents who first moved in are not very different from those who have since moved onto the estate over the years. One-off phenomena are also possible on certain estates: individual estates in the study stand out. Opinions that there is a predominance lie at around half, in one case at 56 %. The assumption that felt and real predominance lie close together – and also create unease – appears to be valid.

Other concrete indications of disquiet and conflict complete the picture of the mood. Evaluation of the free statements in the questionnaire provides information: around 100 respondents gave a hand-written answer to the supplementary question, “...too predominant..? If so, which ones? And how is that expressed, in your opinion?” The overwhelming majority of those who answered were Austrians since birth (84 %), only around 10 % with migration background.

In these residents’ statements there are numerous attributions and interpretations of common problems. Complaints about noise and behaviour head the list with between 35 % and 39 % (but with clear differences between individual estates) followed by uncleanliness with a good fifth of answers. It is down to individual dominant nationalities, they are just “a different cultural circle”. There are also still some more attributions: “There’s a lack of respect and desire to integrate.” Or: “They appear in such large numbers, in such big groups.” These statements show a clear problem.

*Overall clear focuses can be seen*

The naming of dominant groups is very different on the different estates. There are some where these groups are almost not mentioned concretely at all, others where a whole series of various groups are included and others where the dominant group is clearly identified. However, overall clear focuses can be seen: on average around 30 % name various groups or nationalities from the Muslim world as the predominant (and most troublesome) group – however, fluctuation across the estates ranges from 18 % to 66 %. The naming of groups from the Balkans and other eastern European countries is only half as prevalent, together around 15 %. Here too there a great differences between estates.

Generalisations such as “Muslims” or “Arabs” are used relatively rarely. Out of old-Austrian habit or a lack of distinction the collective

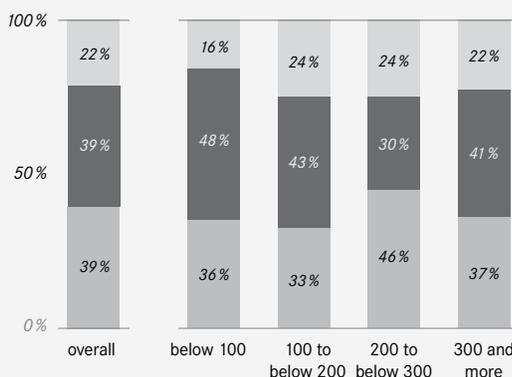
term “ex-Yugoslavia” is still often used. The question as to “large or even too large groups on estates” proved to be very relevant in general, and especially for some of the estates. Clear ethnic references were already seen with the general question of “annoyance”. With this question, as with many others, it is also very much a matter of perceptions and sensitivities as well as basic attitudes, And, with regard to the housing management, of attention to real problems and nascent potential for conflict.

### Too great a predominance of individual nationalities on the estate

According to size (HU)

n = 493

- no opinion
- not too much predominance
- yes, too much predominance



As far as the “good coexistence” that this study has in many cases identified is concerned, the mix actually achieved (many ethnicities) and the differentiation (different generations) certainly contribute. As a result the high proportion of migrants in comparison to Austrians is not at all perceived as being so high. This good balance should not be endangered by a large predominance of individual ethnicities, which can evidently lead to problems – a call to limited-profit housing companies to be highly sensitive about flat allocation.

#### ► A “quota”?

Sixteen years ago “half-half” was the plan for the “Global Estate”, Sozialbau’s initial project. In this regard the reactions of residents on newer estates are especially interesting. They should serve for a wide-ranging check of the concept initiated back then and show what a “mainstream” of opinions looks like today. Circumstances have changed – the make-up of the population of Vienna, the profiles of applicants and standards in subsidised housing. Has reality overtaken the concept? Do residents support such an idea to a relevant extent?

*Showing what a “mainstream” of opinion looks like today*

Can this provide indications for future strategy? Thus the question:

*Do you approve of a proportion of “50 % Austrians and 50 % migrants”?*

And if residents find 50-50 not so good:

*What in your view would be the best proportion?*

Taking into account that the proportion of Austrians and migrants on Sozialbau housing estates can currently be above “half-half”, this should be regarded as a key question for “good coexistence”. The question is normative, determined from outside, and the answers give a picture of residents’ sensitivities and show whether and how much the mood coming from outside affects the housing estates. The answers cannot be interpreted without the context of others such as those on the ethnic situation, on opinions and attitudes and on everyday life such as contacts (where a relatively positive picture was seen).

The respective differentiations have to be examined. Taking only average levels the situation does not look too good: not even 3 out of 10 residents find “half-half” positive. Almost a quarter avoid the question and do not answer, and are thus relatively undecided. Almost half (46 %) reject this proportion and for their part suggest a smaller share of migrants. The migrants more clearly hold themselves back than Austrians, with one third not answering at all (in comparison to one fifth of others). On the other hand they approve of “half-half” twice as much as those who disapprove (44 % to 21 %) – which is understandable from their point of view.

It is not a great surprise that the majority of Austrians (55 %) advocate a smaller proportion of migrants. But the fact that a good fifth of migrants are also in favour of less than “half-half” is an interesting result. It should be taken into account that respondents (as explained) have mostly been Austrian citizens for a long time.

It should firstly be made clear that those apostrophised as “against” suggest a wide range of what they consider “best proportions”. They stretch from a slight preponderance of Austrians to an almost mono-structural estate. This 46 % can roughly be divided into almost 3 out of 10 who favour between “half-half” and “three quarters-a quarter” and around a further radical fifth who want even less coexistence with migrants.

Those people who are “for” or “against” are not easy to define as groups. No preponderance according to gender can be seen and no strong old-young polarisation, at most a preponderance of people

from 50 years old who are not in favour (around one third of those who disapprove and a quarter of those who approve). In terms of occupation the picture with white-collar workers is just as balanced, the blue-collar workers (overall rather sparsely represented) are rather in favour (there is a three times higher proportion of blue-collar workers among responding migrants). With regard to education, a preponderance of those against can only be seen among those who have completed an apprenticeship or technical college. Otherwise the less well and the better and best educated are each represented to the same extent. It is the same picture with the lower or higher earners (according to household income).

Thus neither a clear position of socially disadvantaged groups nor the socially better placed who are “defending privileges” can be seen. At most one can interpret that a good proportion of those Austrians who have always been the “classical residents” of social housing want to keep things “like they used to be”.

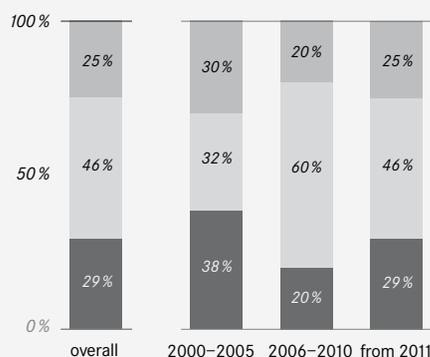
### Attitude to the “fifty-fifty” concept on housing estates

According to construction period

50% Austrians / 50% migrants

n = 493

- don't know
- no, fewer migrants
- yes, good idea



If then it depends relatively little on personal situation and phase of life, where one lives could be an influence. In contrast to the – sometimes visibly generalising – overall proportions (29 % for, 46 % against) great disparities can be seen depending on the age of the estates. On the oldest (occupied from 11 to 16 years) those in favour of “half-half” make up the highest proportion (around 40 %), thus more than those against (only one third). Opinions on 6 to 10 year-old estates are completely different. Here there are three times as many against as in favour (60 % to 20 %). On the newest estates the distribution corresponds to the overall average.

Differences according to roughly grouped estate sizes are less pronounced. Those against still predominate but they are noticeably polarised. On smaller estates (less than 200 flats) those against outweigh

those in favour much more clearly than on larger estates (on smaller estates 49 % against, compared to 25 % in favour, on larger estates 43 % against, 32 % in favour). However, looking more closely, this is in no way unambiguous. An example: on estates with 200 to 299 flats the proportion of those who regard at most a quarter of migrants as optimum is over 30 % (as opposed to an overall average of 20 %). Ultimately differences between individual estates are still some degrees more extreme.

There are definitely estates of certain ages and sizes where more drastic opinions have formed than on average. Put briefly: centres of rejection lie on estates of middle age or slightly above-average size. The real key to an answer perhaps lies in the combination of housing situation and personal attitudes or an interaction.

*A combination of housing situation and personal attitudes*

Attitudes to cultural diversity on the estates have been described above (42 % find it good, 35 % not good). A positive opinion on this is held by over three quarters (!) of those in favour of “half-half” and by only a fifth of those against. According to this: “not appreciating cultural diversity” means, unsurprisingly, also rejecting a mix. Also, a preponderance of migrant groups was only seen by a quarter of those in favour, among those against it was significantly more than double with 57 %. (Reminder: the overall average is 39 % seeing dominance to 39 % not seeing it). Finding “groups too dominant” also fuels a rejection of a “mix”.

The enrichment or perturbation resulting from residents of a different origin will be discussed later. So much can already be said: the relationship to the “half-half” view is clear. It is the same with “being sufficiently respected” that is mentioned at the end of the chapter. With regard to attitudes to “mix”, it is not so much everyday life circumstances and perceptions that are decisive for this attitude but primarily opinions developed about migrants. Whether experience is moulded by opinion or opinion by experience is not a question that can be dealt with here. Constellations on the estates must already be very different, but this alone is certainly not the only decisive factor: a lot is “in the head”. It should certainly be a priority for the housing company, housing management and caretakers to take on board the relatively large group of the undecided and work together on improving “good coexistence”.

*Experience moulded by opinion or opinion by experience?*

#### ④ Diversity as “enrichment”?

In sociological discourse migration is often also viewed under the aspect of economic and cultural enrichment for the country of immigration. The contribution of migrants to the economy is in fact considerable

and cultural enrichment brings variety to the street scene, different cuisines, music etc. It is in no way the case, as often claimed, that this cultural diversity is only welcome to the prosperous liberal middle class. Today the fact that migrants are present in the city with their ethnic attributes and customs is now taken for granted by nearly all social groups – one needs only to think of the markets and Turkish restaurants that Austrians like to frequent. A recent study (Verwiebe et al., 2015) stated: “Socio-cultural manifestations of migration are increasingly perceived as an enrichment of the urban scene.” So far, so good. But how does it look on the “normal” Sozialbau housing estates?

*What is your personal attitude to the lifestyles of other cultures?*

*Do you feel enriched by them? Do you feel disturbed by them?*

In the section on “Ethnic visibility” it was described how a small majority of those respondents who have the confidence to make such statements thought that there were 5 to 10 ethnicities on their estate. A good third estimated more than 10. Against this background it was also investigated whether people thought it was basically good if residents from many countries live on a housing estate. Opinion is divided here: a quarter of respondents did not answer the question and among the others although approval outweighs rejection it is not to a very great extent (around 55% to 45%). The question about personal attitudes to lifestyles should now give further insight into what predominates – enrichment or perturbation? Or is opinion ambivalent?

*What is stronger – enrichment or perturbation?*

A quarter define themselves as “indifferent” to both questions. Among those who take up a position those with a positive or cautiously positive attitude to “enrichment” are predominant with just under 4 out of 10 (37%). At the same time almost 3 out of 10 of those answering (28%) can explicitly see no enrichment. The complementary question about feeling disturbed tended to confirm this finding. “Not feeling disturbed” and “feeling disturbed” are evenly balanced.

This is a clear confirmation of the above-mentioned opinions about “residents from many countries”. The general conclusion looks like ambivalence and “divided residents”. Because it can be assumed that it was quite clear what was to be understood by “enrichment” (more variety, colourfulness instead of uniformity, other people instead of just one’s own, widening outlook through another language and other music than what one is used to etc.) this finding should definitely be viewed critically.

The clearly visible opposite poles in the averages can nevertheless dissolve or mix differently depending on the specific characteristics of the people or the type of estate. Now a short look at them:

► There are shifts but not very large ones, they mostly remain up to 10 % and the differences are greater depending on the type of estate than according to personal characteristics. Opinions thus seem to be more influenced by the specific housing situation than by the life circumstances of those answering.

► Among the estates, the oldest from 2000 to 2005 are noticeable, where there is above-average approval for enrichment (42 % as against an average of 37%). In contrast, those answering from estates from 2006 to 2010 feel disturbed above average (47 % to 37%).

► Larger estates with 200 to 299 flats are also particularly conspicuous, here as many as half feel concerned.

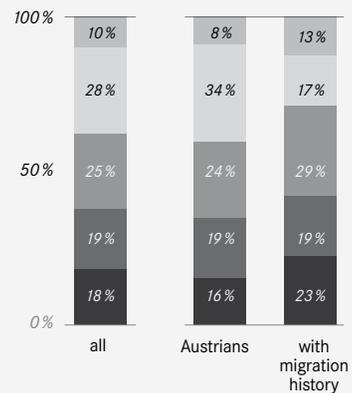
► There is a notable difference between migrants and Austrians. Migrants tend to see enrichment more than Austrians and they feel much less perturbed. But there are still 3 out of 10 migrants who feel disturbed by the lifestyles of other cultures.

### Enrichment through the lifestyles of other cultures?

Overall and according to origin

n = 477

- no opinion
- no
- no it doesn't bother me
- yes, a little
- yes, a lot



► It is clear that the overall high proportions of rejection of enrichment and expression of perturbation are influenced by the statements of Austrians. Disapproval is twice as strong among them, and so is “feeling disturbed”.

► What this degree of disapproval on the part of Austrians means becomes especially vivid when connected with the opinions on “half-half” (Austrians - migrants) differentiated according to the composition of the residents. Those who approve see themselves disproportionately more enriched and less disturbed than those who disapprove,

in fact with a considerable range (more on this in the previous section “The mix”.)

► Overall according to age the young are less disturbed or indifferent, the middle-aged groups show contradictory positions and the most elderly are neither enriched nor particularly disturbed.

► The type of household, whether family or single-person, is not a decisive factor.

On the whole the findings from the overview reflect the general tenor. The opinions and attitudes of adults and how they interact with each other is one thing, but are there differences when it is a matter of the children? Therefore the question is posed again in a slightly different form:

*If you have children living with you: do you approve of them growing up in culturally diverse surroundings?*

In line with the question, answers mainly came from residents who have children themselves (but by no means only – in order to get to the 52% of those answering some grandparents or other people must have mingled in with the 47% of those living with children). With this question answers clearly diverge positively from those on “enrichment” and attitudes to cultural diversity on an estate. Only a few are evasive or indifferent. 7 out of 10 of those answering see “definite or some good” in it (each in equal parts). Some people obviously see this differently for the children than for themselves. Does a milder view of other children and the experience of how much more easily children get along together go to form a pragmatic view with regard to the future in Vienna?

*A pragmatic view with regard to the future in Vienna?*

Just as there were differences in the adults’ statements on enrichment and disturbance, there are also some when it is about the children. But it comes up again that they evidently see other benefits for their children than for themselves. Estates of medium age are an example, where the answers regarding children turn out best. But the larger the estate, the weaker is the “yes”.

When it is about the children of Austrians or migrants, the view is somewhat surprising: high approval for the benefits of culturally diverse surroundings was expressed by both groups, but with Austrians the more convinced (73% approval, almost nobody indifferent, 20% disapproval). Migrants fall back somewhat more on the position “it doesn’t matter to me” (66% approval, 15% indifferent, 13% disapproval).

This assessment certainly also depends on the actual level of diversity on a housing estate. If it is high, making contact using the local language is easier.

The assessment would certainly be different if there were a predominance of one ethnicity here and there (with the exception of Austrians). There would possibly be ethnically-segregated groups of children or teenagers who, as a result of their numbers, would set their own rules for life on the estate, also with the use of language. In some places there could be this kind of predominance or it could at least be “felt” as such. The results of the questionnaires show divided opinion on this (also see the section “The mix”).

Remembering the urban sociological statements cited at the beginning on the significance of cultural diversity for the city or the questionnaire in Vienna, according to which diversity in the city is overwhelmingly positively seen by citizens, the findings lead to the conclusion: “Diversity, yes to out there, but rather not here on my housing estate.” Looking at the finding that around every third resident answers negatively to enrichment through cultural diversity poses further questions in the context of other results of this study.

- With regard to contacts the result is relatively positive from general and ethnic points of view. At the same time, however, the level of annoyance appearing more frequently among residents is certainly relevant with 60 % mentioning it.

- The majority also have a negative attitude regarding opinion on “the mix”. But with the question of whether people see benefits for their children the evaluation is more positive.

Then again with some other questions respondents give very vague answers. In context does that now mean “good”, “not so good” or even “bad coexistence”? A more differentiated view is certainly needed here. There are many other indications that rather do point to positive coexistence. Everyday life works well on the estates, the many facilities are used and appreciated, people meet, want to participate in decision-making and have things in common. Perhaps the aspiration for “enrichment” that is, like others, set by outsiders and not by those affected is setting the sights too high. A lot has already been achieved when residents make efforts towards mutual understanding – day in, day out. Getting on with the neighbours living door by door requires a lot of social competence.

*Many indications that do point to positive coexistence*

## ⑤ “Respect” as a parameter

Respect is one of the most important keys for “good coexistence” and integration. Respect means appreciation, regard and attention towards fellow residents. A lack of respect, disregard or even contempt would be indicators for coexistence that is going utterly wrong. On a housing estate everyday encounters with neighbours require a basic level of reciprocal respect among all residents, otherwise life would become unbearable: respect towards all fellow residents irrespective of origin, of children towards adults, adults towards children and children towards the caretaker etc.

And in particular: the respect of men towards women. The discussion about Muslim migrants often concentrates just on this point. Not that every Austrian man always shows respect towards women. But in Austria men and women have the same rights under the constitution. As a result women today can act confidently, also of course on housing estates. But within Muslim culture there are doctrines which grant women only an inferior position. This basic attitude has very practical effects in everyday life and is also entering the housing estates.

Respect is thus to be defined under the premise of the valid norms of this country which are stipulated in the constitution, not only under individual or ethnicity-specific aspects. A Muslim woman has the same right as an Austrian woman to respect from Austrian as well as migrant men. The same applies to girls and boys.

The comparative density of life together on housing estates could not be imagined without the reciprocal respect of the residents. Even one’s own flat is not an absolutely insulated space. Here too, attentiveness towards one’s immediate neighbours is indispensable. To some extent the regulations on this are defined in the house rules but “good coexistence” is not only a matter of formal regulations that would be sanctioned if disregarded but of observance of the common norms and modes of behaviour in this country. In everyday life on housing estates there are numerous situations in which neighbours should be shown respect, this already begins with greeting. Respect also means not doing anything that could wound the other’s pride. This could apply to the rules for cleanliness, whereby for example cluttered corridors could have a negative impact on the self-esteem of some residents. And much more.

*Even one’s own flat is not an absolutely insulated space*

Since forms and rules of respect are socially influenced, there are clearly differences between different ethnicities. If adjustment is demanded from migrants then it cannot be in the sense that they must not practice many of their customs nor display many of their symbols and signs, but that the codices valid for respectful interaction

are observed – which of course applies equally to Austrians. With the question about being respected it was a matter of residents’ individual sensitivities:

*Do you see respect for your own lifestyle and culture on your housing estate? (Possible answers: “yes, a lot; yes, sufficient; yes, a little; no; don’t know.”)*

More than half of those asked (53 %) feel themselves to be “a lot or sufficiently” respected, without yet differentiating further. Few (18 %) see themselves as respected only “a little” and just as few (17 %) not at all respected. Here we are dealing with a wide spectrum. For example, one person already feels disrespected if his right to peace and quiet is disregarded when children make noise. Another may be disturbed by noise but does not immediately see this as disrespectful, just annoying. After all, 60 % of residents say they have more often been annoyed with their neighbours. In detail:

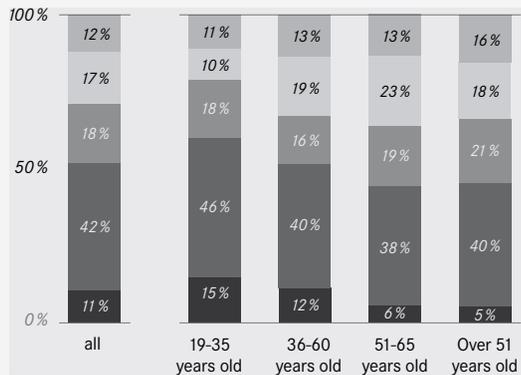
► Migrants see “a lot or sufficient” respect towards themselves on average more frequently than Austrians. However, the difference of 5 % is small.

### Respect for residents’ own lifestyle and culture

According to residents’ age

n = 482

- don’t know
- no
- yes, a little
- yes, enough
- yes, a lot



► Austrians twice as often see no respect for Austrian culture and lifestyle as migrants for theirs (20 % compared to 10%), but together these nevertheless make up a significant minority (another pointer to the profile of those described in this report as “migrants”: a high proportion of this group is made up of people who have been Austrian citizens for more than 10 years).

► Respect is evaluated differently by different age groups. The older ones between 50 and 65 years old do not feel very respected. The number of those saying “yes, a lot or sufficiently” is larger the younger the residents are. Nevertheless, there can be differences between housing estates and even within a housing estate.

► According to the age of estates, residents of medium-aged estates (occupied for 6 to 10 years) feel themselves proportionally less respected.

► If we overlap the respect issue with the question of whether residents see the 50-50 mix of Austrians and migrants as a good thing, those in favour see themselves as considerably more respected than the group of those who are against. If one has had good experience, one is more inclined to favour the “mix”.

The overall evaluation is ambiguous. If only 53 % feel themselves to be respected “a lot or sufficiently”, it is not a good indication of “good coexistence”. But this is not surprising in view of the range of sensibilities and feelings that are connected to respect. Sweeping generalisations like, “As an Austrian you don’t feel respected in your own country any more,” can also be found on housing estates. The survey in any case shows how differently the demand for respect and the offering of respect are seen depending on age.

# The home

## Identification

In attempting to establish whether residents are satisfied with their housing estate and whether they live well together with their neighbours the formula is often used: residents identify themselves with their housing estate. This expression is also used if someone loves their job and “blooms” in it. One cannot identify oneself with something that causes annoyance, that one does not enjoy or when one is somewhere one does not want to be. Being able to identify with one’s flat, housing estate and also local area is decisive for positive self-esteem. Having good housing is among the most important preconditions for a good life. One is proud when one has managed it.

*Self-esteem requires a counterpart* The yardstick for this is taken from the milieu in which one feels one belongs. And self-esteem requires a counterpart to express appreciation. The milieu on the limited-profit housing companies’ estates can be described as predominantly “upwardly oriented”. However, it cannot be assumed that only one milieu is represented on one and the same housing estate. If one wishes to follow conventional sociological classifications, there is certainly also the “petit-bourgeois” milieu. Milieu is not defined by income alone so there are no sharp dividing lines due to the eligibility requirements for the market segments represented by the cooperatives. Residents on an estate can be rather “upwardly oriented” or already have arrived at their desired status as well as residents who have come to terms with their status – for whatever reasons. Put simply, we can speak of residents who greatly identify with their housing estate and those for whom their flat and the estate are essentially just a social amenity to which they are entitled.

- ▶ If residents like to show the housing estate or individual facilities they value to visitors, it means they are proud to live there and this speaks for identification.
- ▶ If residents recommend the estate to flat-seeking friends or relations, this speaks for a very high degree of identification.
- ▶ The same applies, if one is satisfied with the landlord, one would pass on a recommendation.

These are important criteria because if a friend or relation follows the

advice and it then turns out that there is annoyance, discord etc., it rebounds on the advisor.

With this question of identification there are no great differences between Austrians and migrants if they move within the same milieu or if migrants seek a milieu more characterised by Austrians. If there are dividing lines they can thus just as easily lie within the Austrian group as within migrant groups. The residents of the housing estates investigated, including the migrants, belong to the “lower-middle or middle class” from the point of view of income and educational level. On visiting the estates one is inclined – with exceptions – to classify them as “housing estates for the upwardly mobile”.

It is a good basis for coexistence on a housing estate when the residents are proud to live there and do not take all the provisions for granted. That is more than just “housing satisfaction”. “Pride” is an expression of having achieved a status worth striving for. It is thus a question of the special characteristics of a housing estate, which can be the location, the architectonic design or the communal facilities. Sozialbau therefore attempts to give every housing estate a special character. The opposite of pride would be indifference to one’s housing situation and would mean finding nothing special about the housing estate. The following questions arise from this:

*More than just  
“housing  
satisfaction”*

*When you have visitors who don’t yet know your housing situation, what do you point out to them in particular, if you have them? (Children’s play room, community room, laundry, roof terrace, private roof garden or garden, sauna/fitness, swimming pool, something else or nothing special?)*

*Would you particularly recommend YOUR housing estate?*

*Would you recommend Sozialbau as a housing provider?*

(The answers provided for special features mainly include the so-called “hardware” of the estate, the furnishing and facilities. Soft factors such as “good neighbourly contacts”, “an especially helpful caretaker” or “cleanliness” cannot be shown so easily.)

### **a) Special features**

► It is obvious that residents of the few housing estates that have a swimming pool will most often point that out, so this result does not relate to the overall ratings.

► In the ranking this is followed by sauna and fitness room. However, most people did not name anything special.

► Differentiating between Austrians and migrants for the individual facilities, we see that migrants particularly give the children's play room but also the community room and laundry a positive mention more often than Austrians.

► It is the other way around with the swimming pool, a facility with a larger but not exclusive Austrian "fan club" (one third to one quarter).

► Fitness room and sauna are showpieces for both groups equally.

► It should be pointed out that over the course of time the number of facilities on estates has increased and they have become more elaborate – as our visits also showed. Residents who can name "nothing special" live on the oldest estates where there are in fact few facilities. But also on medium-aged estates respondents often tend to remain generally undifferentiated. On first glance it may be disappointing that residents can name "nothing special" that could make their estate stand out against others despite facilities of Sozialbau standard (community room, laundry, children's play room). However, this could also be interpreted as follows: residents no longer see anything extraordinary in this standard but look upon it as normal. If something special is pointed out then perhaps only because especially successful design catches the eye.

A series of other features of the housing situation were worth pointing out for quite a few respondents – very different features. It was interesting to discover that among them the urban quarter, the local neighbourhood or the proximity to green spaces were expressly mentioned.

### ***b) Recommending the estate and the housing company***

The answer to the question of whether a resident would recommend their estate to relatives, friends or acquaintances who were planning to move takes us still further. The same applies to the landlord, the housing company.

*A recommendation includes the whole context of life*

If residents do not want to recommend their own housing estate to others – and also not Sozialbau – there can be no "good coexistence" because a recommendation includes the whole context of life

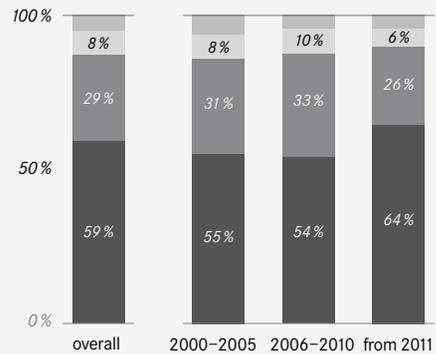
on the estate. As previously mentioned, one may be held accountable for making a recommendation. However, the result of this question is on the whole positive: almost all residents across all the estates investigated would generally recommend Sozialbau to others as a landlord (“yes” or “maybe”). Almost 60 % of them would most certainly give a positive recommendation. With the question of whether residents would recommend their own housing estate, the total number of positive answers (“yes” or “maybe”) is somewhat lower, around 80 %, and only a good half would do so with conviction. However, depending on the estate, top ratings of up to 95 % were seen.

### Recommending Sozialbau as a housing provider

According to construction period

n = 492

- don't know
- no
- maybe
- yes

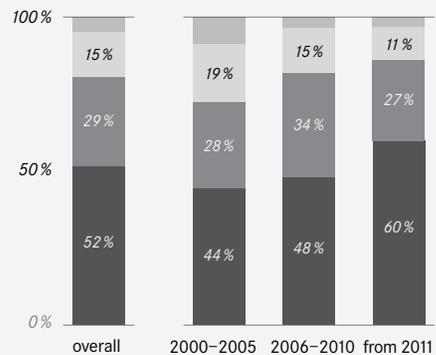


### Recommending the housing estate

According to construction period

n = 492

- don't know
- no
- maybe
- yes



Despite all criticism expressed here and there, it is the oldest residents who would most strongly recommend their estate to others, mostly on the basis of many years of life there. Almost 70 % answer with a clear “yes”. They also recommend the company by far most clearly (“yes” from almost three quarters). If one can read this into it, living on

an estate for a long time thus appears not to be due to resignation or a lack of alternatives but due to basic satisfaction. Because this group includes many parents and grandparents, the level of recommendations is certainly relevant. Among the other age-groups the youngest residents with less experience of housing are in no way those who recommend the least often – the differences are moderate.

It cannot be clearly established whether it is particular kinds of household that would recommend their Sozialbau housing estate. Living with or without children is not a decisive factor. In relation to the estate there is also no significant difference whether the answers come from Austrians or migrants. There is a tendency for migrants to recommend Sozialbau still more than Austrians.

After all that was said about the different qualities, but also problems, of the various housing estates, it is revealing to see whether and how this manifests itself: according to construction periods, a higher recommendation rate is seen on the newest estates (60 % clear recommendation against an average of 52 % in relation to one's own estate, two thirds compared to an average of around 60 % in relation to Sozialbau). The low rate of negative answers only goes above the 10 % mark on the oldest estates (before 2005). The high recommendation rate on the newer estates can also probably be attributed to the increasing quality of the estates over the years, such as with the facilities.

Simple statements such as “the bigger the estate, the...” cannot be made. The most that can be said is that the more positive recommendation rate, both for one's own estate and for the landlord, can be seen on the larger estates. The size of estates – some of them have 300 flats or more – evidently has no negative influence on “spreading the word”. It should be noted that with the question of “housing estate” among the generally low rate of disapproval there is a negative example on estates with “200 to 299 flats”: negative answers from a quarter of residents. Here, problems on individual estates could be concealed which can only be deciphered on closer inspection and with case studies.

### **Coexistence – the overall picture**

What overall picture do the residents draw themselves of coexistence on Sozialbau housing estates newly-occupied over the last 15 years?

*Your concluding evaluation: do you think that the aim of “good coexistence between the generations, the cultures, the various households etc.” has on the whole been achieved?*

When two thirds of residents give a more or less positive answer (about half-half “yes” or “perhaps”) and only a small proportion (10 %) do not want to give a rating, an overall rather acceptable positive conclusion can be drawn: coexistence on the estates is intrinsically good. This is not said glibly by responders. The fact that they can certainly be very critical of their housing estate is shown by the many forthright answers about annoyance, problems and doubts as well as the over 300 hand-written suggestions for improvements collected with the questionnaires. In addition, this general question came at the end of the questionnaire so that residents would already have had a chance to reflect on all the issues while answering the other questions. It can thus be assumed that these judgements reflect reality.

*Over 300  
hand-written  
suggestions  
included*

It is also not necessarily a negative factor if a good fifth of residents think that good intercultural coexistences has not been achieved. It should be pointed out again that social life on housing estates is not static, but every estate has its history. Are residents’ life phases reflected in the answers? Or are other criteria more decisive?

Firstly: to a certain extent the age of residents exerts an influence, not so much the type of household. A migration background definitely influences the answers and the most conspicuous is the opinion of the “mix” on an estate. The size of estates seems to play a certain role but their age does not. In detail:

► The make-up of households is not particularly decisive – in general the ratings are similar depending on whether residents live alone, with a partner, with children etc. The evaluations of families with children tend to be more expressly positive (up to almost 40 %).

*Expressly  
positive ratings  
from families  
with children*

► People’s age is more clearly reflected in the answers. Some things appear “on the margins” – an above-average level of indecision among the youngest residents (19 to 35 years old) and the most elderly (over 65). The former, among other things, perhaps because they have not yet lived long enough on their estate to form a clear opinion? The latter because they have already experienced changes? Or because good coexistence of the generations becomes increasingly important for them? Plausible, possible.

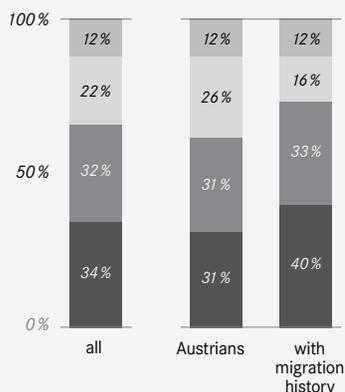
► However, if people from these two age groups are decisive, the answer is positive (both over 70 % with “yes or maybe”). The proposition that “good coexistence has on the whole been achieved” received most negative answers from 51 - 65 year-old residents – in comparison to the average of a good fifth, around 30 % of them regard it as not having been achieved.

► Particularly conspicuous is the fact that the positive view of people with migration background is considerably higher than that of Austrians. Whereas 40% of migrants say it has been successful, the rate among Austrians is only 30%. Because the background to this question is to a great extent “interethnic” coexistence – and this was understood by people – this points to a very conspicuous difference in perception. Within a certain range (10%) community life on the estates is actually experienced differently by the two groups.

### On the whole, has good coexistence been achieved?

According to origin

n = 490



Here it needs to be mentioned again that the whole spectrum of current residents of newer Sozialbau housing estates with migration background is not represented in the available answers from “migrants”. This also applies to Austrians but to a lesser extent because responders to complex questionnaires as a rule represent a rather one-sided selection. Among migrants there is a very clear preponderance of those who have been Austrian citizens for a long time, supplemented by people from European countries, as a rule better educated and higher earners. It may therefore be assumed that here can rather be seen the opinions and attitudes of those who have “made it” in a certain way, and only to a small extent those who are “still on the way”. It is precisely this that emerges as a special quality of the survey: to some extent a picture could be drawn of the life together of those residents who have already achieved a very high level of integration, who “have arrived”. Several of those interviewed with migration background said: “We get on well together, when everybody observes our (i.e. the local) rules.”

The specific profiles of the estates should now be traced in more detail on the basis of the analyses. This is where approaches could firstly be found to improve the situation, clear up misunderstandings etc. (see the article “The Key Issue of Framework Conditions”).

The fact that the evaluation of coexistence was to a great degree related to that of “between the cultures” is not surprising in view of the large proportion of questions on this issue in the questionnaire. Nevertheless it is surprising how strongly the respective positions on the issue of the proportion of around “50 % Austrians, 50 % migrants” on housing estates correlate with the answers about successful coexistence. It is very logical but is the most conspicuous finding in the analysis of the concluding evaluation: success or failure?

As was shown, among those in favour of “half-half” 50 % consequently also found that good coexistence had clearly been achieved, and also only a minority of 9 % answered negatively. In contrast, among those who favour smaller proportions of migrants on housing estates, there is a very clear predominance of decidedly negative answers about good coexistence (36 %, four times as many as among the group in favour). Only one in five sees coexistence as good overall.

This vividly illustrates how it can come about that on overall average fewer than 40 % give a clear positive answer to the question “success or failure”. It can of course also be read the other way around: if one finds that good coexistence has not been achieved, one is more likely to see a possible improvement in a smaller proportion of migrants on the estate. Consequently, those against “half-half” also recommend Sozialbau and their own housing estate distinctly less often.

Against this background, can “more successful and less successful” types of housing estate be identified? A question that in retrospect should interest planners, builders, landlords and housing managers. Smaller indications of possible problem groups of estates can be found but they are not very consistent. Everything rather points to the fact that the polarity of agreement and rejection described above is a phenomenon that pervades many estates. The size and construction period of the estates have no significant influence here.

*Smaller indications of possible problem groups of estates*

According to the size of estates, indications of problems can rather be seen among the “large but not too large” estates with 200 to 299 flats. Whereas on all other estates those explicitly in favour clearly outweigh those against, here there is a preponderance of negative opinions on good coexistence (33 % no, compared to 26 % yes). This is where a closer look should begin. In the individual results some housing estates can be seen which do not have positive results on this question. And they are the same ones from which negative answers also emerge on other issues. This means that housing companies must ultimately direct their attention to every single housing estate – a targeted, customised approach will be imperative.

## Summary of the Results

The results of the written questionnaires, the interviews and visits paint the following overall picture of coexistence on Sozialbau housing estates constructed since 2000. Can life on the estates be described as “good coexistence” between Austrians and migrants?

Put briefly, yes, it can. The results are on the whole positive, even if in some areas the results are not as good as could be hoped, and notwithstanding that there were some negative evaluations of some aspects of life together. Yes, because when the results are differentiated and overlaid it can be seen that residents are not always unambiguous: they may be irritated by one thing or another but overall they are nevertheless proud of their housing estate, identify with it and would almost unconditionally recommend it along with Sozialbau. And ultimately statements are always influenced by the life situation of those answering. Thus much is often ambivalent.

*Statements are also always influenced by the life situation*

“Good coexistence” is a wish that in the first instance has nothing to do with ethnicity but is a matter of general everyday life. And it is the “small” everyday things that make for “good coexistence”: closer contact with neighbours, also settling a dispute in the building etc. Then beyond this: the special challenges of living together as a result of today’s ethnic diversity on housing estates.

### ► **The cross-ethnic results**

If there were little contact between residents or great annoyance about the usual small everyday problems and excessive criticism of caretakers and management, there would be a prevailing mood of dissatisfaction, it would not be possible to speak of “good coexistence” and there would already be no basis for interethnic coexistence. But there is nothing to criticise in this respect on the Sozialbau housing estates: there is lively contact between residents and certainly also annoyance – but not to the extent that would require long explanations, even if there is room for improvement in the way in which conflicts are resolved. The majority of residents said that they were satisfied with the infrastructure and the location, they are satisfied with the estate management and their caretakers and furthermore would by all means like to participate more in shaping life together on the estates.

## **Contacts**

Over seven out of ten residents have closer contacts in their building and are thus well-intentioned towards good neighbourliness beyond polite gestures. It can be seen that the residents' phase of life is substantially decisive for these contacts. Those living alone have by far the fewest, while families with children have the most. Much about life together on the housing estates is thus indebted to the relatively small mix among first occupants relating to their phase of life. In any case it was seen that a minimum average of around one sixth of residents remain who do not interact with neighbours.

## **Annoyance**

A good six out of ten residents say that they have more often had problems with other residents. They are the usual reasons for annoyance on housing estates: between around forty and fifty percent complain about the behaviour of children and teenagers, a lack of cleanliness and especially noise. Use of the building's facilities causes annoyance less often.

So even though one may have problems, this does not exclude good neighbourly contacts. Nevertheless: among residents who clearly expressed themselves about problems with other residents, not even 20 % of them are satisfied with how these conflicts were resolved. This is a negative factor for "good coexistence". However, in order not to produce an inaccurate picture, annoyance should also be seen in the context of the life situation of residents. For example, it is rather incomprehensible that in view of the excellent condition of the housing estates there is frequent annoyance about a lack of cleanliness.

## **Facilities on the housing estates, special living arrangements**

Whether and how residents use communal indoor and outdoor facilities is decisive in evaluating coexistence because this is where social life is shaped in many facets. The overall balance is thoroughly positive. Almost two-thirds of those questioned said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the infrastructure of their housing estate with a clear increase in satisfaction on newer estates explained by the fact that standards are continually being raised. However, a positive evaluation of a certain facility does not mean that the respondent actually uses it. What seems to be important is: "we've got that on

our estate”. Communal facilities are not necessarily a precondition for good contacts but they are of great importance for certain occasions. There are not many special living arrangements such as senior-citizen flat-sharing but these are seen positively by the overwhelming majority of almost 90 %.

### **Caretakers**

Most of the housing estates have a caretaker and cleaning companies are responsible for cleanliness. The most important role of the caretaker is to mediate between residents and the housing management in everyday questions. However, their “hinge role” also puts them at the forefront when it comes to problems and annoyance. They are considered sufficiently competent by a majority of residents but only by around 60 %, another 20 % are undecided. Furthermore, almost a third of residents also discuss personal matters with them.

### **Housing management**

Does the housing management company provide good information, order and cleanliness, maintenance and safety? It gets an averagely good assessment. But there are certainly differences between the categories. Although eight out of ten residents are sufficiently or very satisfied with information provision, only around six out of ten are satisfied with the housing management company with regard to cleanliness, maintenance and safety. Residents obviously have high expectations. As could be expected, order and cleanliness is a special concern for elderly residents.

### **Residents' initiatives**

Residents themselves have (so far?) done rather little towards developing a framework for greater “togetherness” through organised personal meetings and communication. Although the annual parties organised “from outside” by the housing management company are seen positively, beyond that the picture is rather of a lack of information and resolution in questions of personal initiative.

The general question of whether residents would like more say in the running of their estate was clearly answered with “yes” by more than half of respondents — but how? Only a quarter expressed interest

in a potential residents' association. Internet forums exist here and there and these may become more popular.

In contrast, approval for tenants' representation was over 40 % and adding the "perhaps" answers brings it to over 80 %. It is thus rather "formal" types of self-organisation, directed outwards towards the housing management company, that rouse interest.

## **The local neighbourhood**

The question "Do you like your local neighbourhood?" was answered extremely positively with almost 90 % saying yes. And the newer a housing estate is, the better the location is rated, but starting from an already very high level. This result is certainly significant because the housing estates are located in urban quarters with very different structures spread throughout almost all parts of Vienna.

### **► *Ethnic dimensions***

## **Interethnic contacts**

As mentioned above, seven out of ten residents say that they have good neighbourly contacts in their building. Out of these around a further seven out of ten say these include contacts with neighbours of different origin. According to this, around half of all respondents maintain social contacts with other ethnicities. Residents thus have much in common and their origin is no obstacle. However, residents with a migration history show themselves to be more sociable than Austrians.

## **Ethnic visibility**

Do residents perceive the diversity on their housing estates and what determines this? A majority think they would come across five to ten ethnicities on their estate and a good third estimate more than ten ethnicities. Ethnic signs, symbols and customs are noticed and the Muslim headscarf is the focus.

## The “mix”

*No concrete answer from up to a quarter of residents*

A variety of ethnicities, or also a predominance of some, the quest for a formula for balance that enables good coexistence, the desire for “limits” or even “restrictions” – in answers to these can perhaps be found keys for promising concepts. However, all of these questions prove to be sensitive, with around a quarter of respondents not giving a concrete answer. This is not a good result.

Apart from the above-mentioned reservations, opinion is divided on the question of whether it is basically considered a good idea that residents from many countries should live on the housing estate. Agreement outweighs disagreement but not to a very great extent.

In addition, opinions are roughly equal on whether certain nationalities are over-represented on the estate. Around four out of ten each say yes or no. Migrants also agree here, if only to a small extent. The older a resident is, the more likely he or she is to complain about a negative dominance of one ethnicity. Those who named a particular ethnicity mainly mentioned groups from the Muslim world, less often from the Balkans or from eastern European countries.

The idea of a fifty-fifty “mix” of Austrians and migrants on housing estates was also put up for discussion in the survey. Almost half of respondents did not like this idea and instead named a wide range of alternative relations, all of them towards a “smaller proportion of migrants”. Only three out of ten are in favour of the balanced proportions. There are strong disparities for example according to the age of the estates; on the oldest (occupied for ten to sixteen years) agreement was even predominant whereby on the newer estates disagreement was particularly strong.

However, a significant finding is that it is not so much everyday life situations and perceptions that are decisive for these attitudes but mainly opinions developed about migrants. The rejection of an equal “mix” too clearly corresponds to negative attitudes in all the subjects raised with regard to the ethnic dimensions of coexistence.

## Enrichment

Do residents feel enriched by the diversity on their estate or do they feel disturbed? Which predominates? These were further questions about personal attitudes to other cultures. Among those who were prepared to comment, almost four out of ten with a positive or cautiously positive attitude outweigh the under three out of ten who can explicitly see no enrichment in diversity. The complementary question — about

feeling disturbed – confirmed the tendency. Here “not feeling disturbed” and “feeling disturbed” were roughly equal. Thus opinion about “residents from many countries” is ambivalent, as attitudes to diversity also show. With regard to enrichment through diversity for the children, opinion is different and considerably more positive.

## **Respect**

In general, without distinguishing between ethnicities, a good half of respondents feel “greatly or sufficiently” respected. Only few, below a fifth, feel themselves just “a little” respected. and just as few see themselves as not respected at all. There is no great difference between Austrians and migrants. The number of those responding with “Yes, greatly or sufficiently” increases the younger the residents are.

## **Residents’ opinion of their home**

Even if the picture of coexistence looks ambivalent — positive in relation to coexistence in general, with rough edges regarding ethnicity-specific issues — this obviously does not prevent residents from identifying with their housing estate, “liking” it and therefore recommending it without reservation.

► Do residents identify with their housing estate? What are they proud of?

The standard of facilities on Sozialbau housing estates – communal room, children’s play room, fitness room etc. — has obviously come to be taken for granted over time. The main reason for pride, for those who have one, is of course the swimming pool, followed by sauna and fitness room. Migrants rate the children’s play room, communal room and laundry more highly than Austrians. And many also mention liking the local neighbourhood.

► Would you recommend your housing estate, and Sozialbau?

On the whole there is great approval here, both in relation to Sozialbau as well as to the housing estate. Almost all residents across all estates would recommend the housing association, and hardly less frequently around 80 % would advise acquaintances, friends and relations to apply for an apartment on their estate.

## Summary with ambivalences

*No static, always  
unambiguous  
result*

Two-thirds of residents give a more or less positive answer and only a very small proportion could not decide on an evaluation. Unanimous enthusiasm thus obviously has its limits – it seems that praise is not easily given. But this is nevertheless a positive overall result: from the viewpoint of the residents, life together on the housing estates is good, also in the overview of the empirical results. However, there is no static and always unambiguous balance.

Perhaps it is precisely here that the quality of housing estates can be found. Because it is the ambiguous and the non-static which make for the quality of coexistence on estates along with the permanent tension between privacy and openness. A housing estate on which the same opinions always predominate, where there is no annoyance, where all the residents are alike, only one language is spoken, where foreign influences are warded off, where everything is regulated down to the smallest detail, where residents do not dare to step out of line and difference is unwelcome – such a hundred-percent estate would lose its social quality and its power to promote integration. It is precisely the ambivalence of the residents themselves, their wavering, the to and fro, today like this tomorrow differently, the “yes, ok, but” and the contradictions in their own opinions that open opportunities for “good coexistence”. It is the remit of housing companies to provide the architectonic and organisational structure so that these ambivalences can be experienced.

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# Solutions for Neighbours' Conflicts

WALTER WEILAND

Mediative elements as prevention  
and mediation as an alternative

Inseparable from the concept of “housing” is the circumstance that people with differences in values, needs, origins, traditions, preferences, age and gender living together leads to conflicts. Besides the social aspect, dealing with them also represents an operational cost factor, and they should be solved quickly and unbureaucratically, ideally without legal proceedings. Limited-profit housing companies are increasingly endeavouring to deal with these matters efficiently – through mediation and conflict management.

*An unbureaucratic  
solution without  
legal proceedings*

Sozialbau, which manages over 51,000 dwellings and is the leading limited-profit housing company in Austria, reacted to this circumstance by setting up a mediation department. Since 2005 neighbours' conflicts which could not be resolved by the usual written injunctions of the housing management have been passed on to the mediation department. Up to July 2016 there were 243 mediation cases worked on and registered by external and in-house mediators. The aim of this author's Master's thesis, parts of which are included here, is to evaluate these mediation cases, to identify the accompanying circumstances of the conflicts and to investigate under what circumstances mediation leads to a sustained solution for neighbours' disputes.

## Also help towards self-help

Housing as a public asset is one of the most important cornerstones of the Austrian housing industry. Besides providing up-to-date and economical living space this public asset takes on an important social and socio-political role in Austria.<sup>1</sup> The legal definition of limited-profit housing associations as laid out in § 1 (2) Wohnungsgemeinnützigkeitsgesetz (Austrian Limited-Profit Housing Act) defines them as companies whose activities are directed towards serving the common welfare in housing and settlement, whose assets are dedicated to the fulfilment

of such tasks and which allow regular checks and monitoring of their business operations. This basic definition contains practically all of the principles of housing as a public asset: the public benefit, the limited field of activity, limited distribution of profits and the principle of cost-covering as well as the obligatory supervision and monitoring. The limited-profit housing sector thus has the responsibility of providing services for the common good through private law companies in the public interest.<sup>2</sup>

Strengthening the community through identification, integration and networking of residents can be promoted by a wide range of instruments (participation, “Gemeinschaft braucht Raum” (“Community Needs Space”), caretakers etc.). A balanced residential structure (via occupancy management) is the basis for a functioning community and neighbourhood. The effects on the community include the social, demographic and ethnic mix, a healthy housing environment as well as the raising of housing standards and thus an increase in housing satisfaction. In this context the long-standing director of the “Austrian Federation of Limited-Profit Housing Associations”, Theodor Österreicher, also sees conflict-free life of the members of a housing cooperative as part of their assignment.<sup>3</sup>

## How conflicts affect the housing management company

The housing management company staff are confronted with a large number of complaints and conflicts in their daily work. “A week at work without residents’ conflicts – an illusion” is the title of a contribution from Peter Wirth, director of the Sozialbau housing management company “Eigentum”, to a housing conference in 2003. He continues, “Conflicts are considered as chances, sure! But as a rule they cost us time and they cost our clients quality of life. Only very few people take energy from conflicts – most are passive and are involuntarily drawn in.”<sup>4</sup>

*Most of those affected are passive and involuntarily drawn in*

Neighbours’ disputes, annoyance caused by noise, uncleanness or unpleasant smells are everyday occurrences along with the daily management of complaints in the administrative field, defects, technical malfunctions and differences of opinion about operating costs and the calculation of surplus funds. Demands for price reductions, claims for defects liability in new buildings and complaints about improper maintenance or overhaul work are familiar subjects for the housing management staff on a daily basis.<sup>5</sup>

During the course of professional training and a qualifying

examination real estate managers are not only equipped with specialist competence, because their work also requires social competence and experience they gain themselves through conflict and complaint management, to be able to resolve a controversy adequately. In a nationwide survey of all estate agents in Austria carried out as part of a study by the Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU) regarding qualification requirements for staff, it was found that the proportion was 45 % professional and 55 % social competence.<sup>6</sup>

*Proportion  
of specialist  
and social  
competence*

It is thus a question of recognising conflicts as chances for positive change. Jürgen Sattmann, a mediator, puts this statement into perspective in his book “Wie man aus Streithähnen Gewinner macht” (“How to Make the Quarrelsome into Winners”) as follows: “With all high regard and educational importance of this principle, I would like to state here that conflicts very often also lead to unpleasant and painful experiences. Maintaining functioning social relationships with our business partners, colleagues, friends, partner and family therefore requires that we deal with conflicts constructively. Even positive-minded people can provoke and allow conflicts to happen. Conflicts are an important and essential contribution to positive development in a social community. Regeneration can only come about when I am ready to seek solutions or answers to the demands or questions raised by conflict. Progress and development are results of new values, ideas and concepts. However, the decisive factor is always how conflicts are actually handled.”<sup>7</sup>

## **Changes in conflict culture**

The change in conflict culture in the real estate management sector has contributed to an increase in conflicts because more and more is demanded to be done quickly under time pressure without a waiting period. Along with this a quicker reaction to the improvement of client satisfaction is called for and more must also be provided. The time pressure that results from the demand for a faster and faster reaction results in the impression that clients have become more assertive and demanding. Complaints come in by telephone, in person and in writing, whereby a lot has changed as a result of the medium of email in particular (described by the common term “a flood of mail”).<sup>8</sup>

### **Preventive measures**

In all of their newly-constructed housing projects Sozialbau invites residents to a so-called “get-to-know-you meeting” two weeks before moving

*A good start is sustainably appreciated for a long time*

in and a site visit – called “open house day” – to see their flat. This idea was born during the construction of the “Inter-ethnische Nachbarschaft” housing estate, which was first occupied in 2000, and the experience was so good that they have continued with it for all their subsequent newly constructed housing. In an evaluation of the above-mentioned project, which has appeared in book form, surveyed tenants report that the site visit to get to know the project and their future neighbours was extremely important. Some say that this event was the beginning of today’s neighbourly spirit in the building. Residents have continued to appreciate the good start. The “get-to-know-you meeting” has enabled Sozialbau to chalk up a major success with the residents with minimal effort.<sup>9</sup>

Future residents of a new housing estate are confronted with an abundance of new emotional situations when moving in. It is not only that moving into a new flat as the centre of personal life means a considerable change in one’s immediate surroundings, there is also the move, change of address with all the formalities involved, new infrastructure etc. to be considered. A “get-to-know-you meeting” at which representatives of the housing management introduce themselves along with caretakers, the cleaning firm and local authority officials and give important information about the new housing estate should serve to give tenants the feeling that they are being well and attentively looked after.

Not least it leads to new neighbours getting to know each other so they will be better able to deal with any possible future conflicts. It is obvious that people who have got to know one another in a relaxed atmosphere are more likely to find a solution to loud noise and other neighbours’ conflicts by talking face-to-face than when a neighbour only exists as a nameplate on a door. This get-to-know-you meeting also demands the communication skills of the housing management staff member in a group when it is a matter of, for example, chairing a round of introductions with the future residents sitting in a circle. The aim is, as far as possible, to get all of them “on board” and encourage them to talk about their children, pets and interests and thereby remove the fear of “strangers”. This plays a particular role not only, but particularly, for residents with a migration background.

### **The residents’ party**

Residents’ parties take place in the summer months on many Sozialbau housing estates at the invitation of the housing management company. They aim to create a positive atmosphere in the community and support communication among residents with music, games for children and adults as well as snacks and drinks. The aim is to motivate

the residents' community to organise further parties and activities independently. Conversations and discussions with representatives of the housing management and the board in a "private" atmosphere are intended to promote empathy and overcome communication barriers.

### **The "Team-Kick-Cup"**

Team-Kick is a ball game with rules reminiscent of the "Tipp Kick" table football game from the 1960s (Translator's note: Tipp Kick is similar to Subbuteo.) Its special feature is that the focus is not on the physical ability or skill of the players but it is intended to promote communication among residents. This is supported by an animation team at the residents' parties. It should also be mentioned that the finals are played at a large-scale event in autumn which enables contact between residents from all over Vienna and thus makes a further contribution to communication beyond residents' own housing estates.

*Communication  
among residents  
through play*

### **The operating costs hotline**

The so-called "operating costs hotline", which Sozialbau provides each year, can also be seen as a de-escalating and thus mediative element. The accounting of operating costs is generally a very sensitive part of housing management work. The operating costs are exhaustively listed in § 21 ff. of the Tenancy Act (MRG) and are accounted for each year. The credit balance or additional payments have to be settled with tenants immediately and the monthly payments for the following year are adjusted on the basis of the current year's results, which often brings with it an increase in living costs. This unpleasant fact leads to tenants questioning the correctness of the calculation and being able to ask for it to be checked by a mediation body. Immediately after the bills are sent out, the opportunity is provided for tenants to get the information they want and receive explanations from competent staff members in cases of misunderstanding. Hundreds of residents from the Sozialbau group use the "operating costs hotline" every year. In many cases this avoids time-consuming proceedings in front of a mediation body.

### **Residents' meeting – a communication challenge**

A residents' meeting offers housing management company staff the opportunity to present themselves and their work positively and pass on necessary information to tenants and owner-occupiers. Nevertheless, the group-dynamic effects that can result should not be underestimated. It is only natural that residents' meetings should be used to

*The facts of the matter can sometimes be neglected*

point out deficiencies and shortcomings of all kinds – also those of the housing management. However, it can also happen that some residents use the chance of having an audience to make themselves a name as a spokesperson. The facts of the matter are sometimes neglected and space opens for emotional outbursts. It needs a certain amount of communicative skill to deal with these conflict situations and sensitively lead the subject back to the factual level.

Under the title “group processes” the psychologist Rainer Maderthaner states, “The presence of other people (e.g. colleagues, spectators, audience) often has a great influence on an individual’s cognitive, emotional and action-oriented processes. The supposition of being watched and judged by others very often leads to social activation which, independently of the circumstances of the situation, can have negative effects (e.g. stage-fright) as well as a positive influence (e.g. increased motivation) on individuals’ behaviour (Matlin & Zajonc, 1968). In a meta-analysis of over 200 studies on this subject Bond and Titus (1983) found that socially induced (psychological) activation can lead to reductions in performance when the tasks are complex (e.g. playing music) whereas with simple tasks (e.g. sporting endeavours) a better or faster performance can be achieved.”<sup>10</sup> For these reasons it is important to train the communication skills of housing managers to deal attentively with differences of opinion with participants at residents’ meetings as well as with various personal contacts with clients. In this context it is very important to get the conversation partner “on side”.

### **The District and General meetings**

*Issues from the housing estates are also raised*

District and General Meetings are only held by limited-profit housing associations, not by cooperative finance companies. Their statutes stipulate that members of the board and supervisory board are elected at the General Meeting. Votes are also taken on approval of the annual financial statement, a resolution on allocation of profits, use of reserve funds and discharge of the board and advisory board. Each association member who is sent to the General Meeting as a delegate is elected at the District Meetings to which all members are invited. It should also be noted that under the item on the agenda “any other business” at District Meetings issues are also raised from the housing estates and commented and reflected upon by the chairman of the cooperative association, but also by other members.

## The concept of mediation

Mediation is a structured process of alternative, out-of-court settlement of conflicts. It is used in many social areas of life for private and public conflicts. The aim is that the parties to the conflict reach a fair balance of sometimes contrary interests on the basis of mutual respect and an agreed consensus for the future. Mediation thus represents an alternative to strife, victory/defeat, hurt, assignment of guilt, becoming/remaining a victim and the break-up of relationships. Mediators support the parties to the dispute to develop independent solutions. Responsibility for how the conflict is solved remains with the parties to the dispute while the mediator takes responsibility for shaping the process of working through the conflict (“custodians of the process”).<sup>11</sup>

People look for help from mediation because they cannot solve conflicts with others – with their partners, children, parents, neighbours, companies, organisations etc. – without the assistance of a third party. They often already have a long history of conflict behind them with misunderstandings and disputes for which they have mostly made vain efforts to solve.<sup>12</sup> Mediators are responsible for ensuring that emotions or perceived slights do not run out of control and mutual respect is maintained. They support participants to become clear about their feelings and interests and look to the future without disregarding the past. They contribute to the disputing parties coming to a mutually acceptable solution and achieving a win-win situation that is a long-term resolution of the conflict.

*Ensure that emotions do not run out of control*

The legally stipulated obligation to discretion and confidentiality is an important factor in establishing trust between mediation participants and mediators, which is one of the basic preconditions for a successful mediation process.

### Mediation at Sozialbau

Mediation has been used by the Sozialbau housing management since 2005 for working through residents’ conflicts. At first only one staff member went through the appropriate training and carried out mediation until in the course of 2009 three further freelance mediators were engaged and by 2015 there was a total of eight freelance mediators. One male Afghan mediator and one woman of Turkish origin have been working successfully on intercultural mediation. An application for mediation can be made by the housing management company of a housing estate if no successful resolution to a dispute can be found despite standardised warning letters to the affected residents or a personal intervention. It should be noted that there are grounds for

exemption from a mediation process such as if one of the parties to the conflict is impaired for health or psychological reasons.

However, there is a basic risk of escalation of neighbours' disputes through ignoring or underestimating them. As conflict researcher Friedrich Glasl states in his book "Konfliktmanagement" ("Conflict Management"), from level 4 of his "phase model of escalation" allies are sought in order to confirm one's own self-image.<sup>13</sup> This can lead to a neighbours' conflict that started with two people or families spreading to all the flats on one staircase or even further.

### **Research work – basic explanation and questions**

The author of the study from which this article is extracted works at the Sozialbau housing management company as a department head and mediator. The decision to carry out this research ripened during the course of mediation training through the realisation that although the number of mediation cases was recorded every year and reported to the board along with the costs, beyond this the possible data material was not gathered. The aim of this empirical investigation is to evaluate the Sozialbau mediation department cases and look into the circumstances that led to successful mediation.

Conflicts between autochthonous Austrians and migrants have been the focus of social and political discussions for decades and are an important subject area. Accordingly, special attention is given to examine conflicts in which residents without Austrian citizenship were involved and investigate whether and to what extent often-expressed prejudices towards migrants in this regard are justified or unfounded. In addition, conflicts in Vienna's 10th district were examined more closely because this district registered the highest number of mediation cases. A distinction was made between conflicts or mediation cases and mediation that was actually carried out. Although the registered cases were all passed on for mediation, for different reasons mediation was not carried out in every case. The housing management company correspondence and the mediators' final reports on to what extent a case could be concluded with a positive outcome were used for the research, categorised and the necessary data gathered from computer records and entered into an Excel table. The evaluation was largely carried out with pivot tables.

*Mediation was  
not carried out  
in all cases*

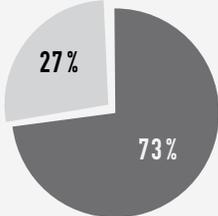
### **Results of the mediation carried out**

The investigation of 243 mediation cases during the period from January 2005 to July 2016 found that in 132 conflicts a settlement could be agreed with the conflict parties and thus a positive conclusion drawn. In 25 % of cases of conflict no mediation was carried out. The

success rate of 73 % in mediations carried out speaks for the usefulness of the method as well as the professional work of the mediators. The figures show that in 132 cases agreement could be reached and in 50 cases this was not possible.

**Positively concluded mediations**

- positive result
- negative result

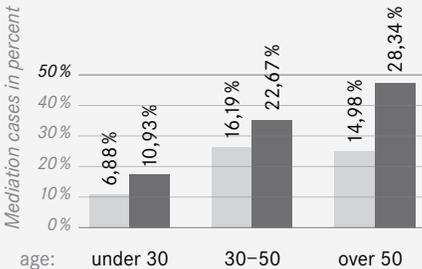


**► Women or men**

More women were registered in all age groups, whereby women over 50 years-old made up the highest percentage with 28.34 %, followed by women between 30 and 50 years-old with 22.67%. The highest proportion of men was in the group between 30 and 50 years-old with 16.19%. The lowest proportion was in the under 30 age group with 10.93 % of women and 6.88 % of men.

**Conflict parties according to gender and age**

- male
- female

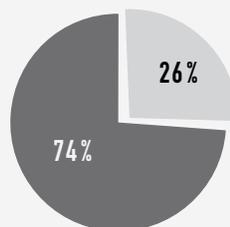


**► Conflicts with migrants**

Due to the available computer data for this study the only distinction possible was between people with or without Austrian citizenship. A possible migration background (in accordance with the Austrian definition of the “Recommendations for the 2010s”) could not be taken into account.<sup>14</sup> The proportion of 26 % of mediation participants without Austrian citizenship is relatively low in view of the quota of approx. 50 % of residents with migration background on the newer Sozialbau housing estates constructed since 2000.

## Mediation participants with/without Austrian citizenship

- Not all mediation participants have Austrian citizenship.
- All mediation participants have Austrian citizenship.



### ► Age differences of mediation participants

It was found that the overwhelming majority (46 %) of mediations took place between residents whose age difference was no greater than ten years. It can be supposed that most of the residents moving in to a new housing estate are approximately around the same age.

### ► New arrivals and existing tenants

New tenants moving in to housing estates that have existed for some time is a frequent reason for conflicts. The habits and unspoken rules of life together established over years between neighbours are neither recognised nor understood by “new tenants”. Added to this there is often the problem of a lack of contact being established between the “new” and “old” residents. The study shows that 78 % of neighbours’ conflicts occur between “old tenants” and those who have recently moved in. In comparison, conflicts between “old tenants” make up only 22 %.

### ► Older or newer housing estates

The question as to whether more conflicts occur on newer or older housing estates has a clear answer: in older housing built before 1972 there were 103 cases of conflict, and thus considerably more than in housing built between 1973 and 1992 with 55 conflicts. On housing estates built from 1993 there is again an increase to 85 mediation cases.

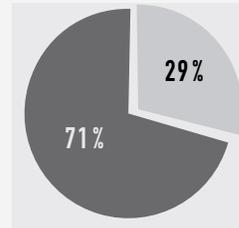
### ► Typical working-class districts versus middle-class districts

The remarkable answer to this research question is: in relation to the number of apartments managed most conflicts occurred in Vienna’s “posh district” of Hietzing (13th district), equal with the 23rd district, followed by the 12th district. However, in absolute figures Favoriten, the 10th district, had the highest number with 66 conflicts, whereby 10,227 flats are managed in this district – in comparison to Hietzing

with 2,019 housing units, around five times more. In the middle-class district of Döbling – just like Favoriten – 0.9 % conflicts per housing unit were registered over the same period.

### Proportion of conflicts with migrants in the 10th district

- Not all mediation participants have Austrian citizenship.
- All mediation participants have Austrian citizenship.



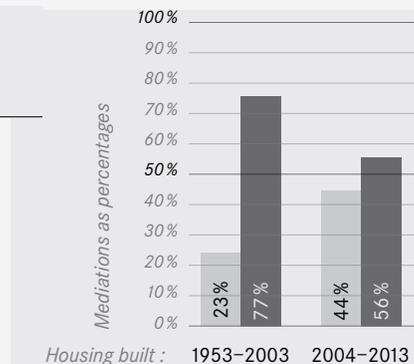
### ► Relationship to housing units per district in Vienna

Favoriten is the most highly populated district in Vienna (194,746 inhabitants) and is also among the five districts in Vienna with the highest proportion of residents of foreign origin.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly the research question was whether the proportion of mediation participants without Austrian citizenship is higher than in other districts. It was found that in comparison to the total number of conflicts in Vienna the proportion was only 3 % higher.

In newer housing built between 2004 and 2015 there were considerably more conflicts registered involving migrants than on housing estates built between 1953 and 2004 – 44 % compared to 23 %.

### Conflicts involving migrants in older and newer housing

- Not all mediation participants have Austrian citizenship.
- All mediation participants have Austrian citizenship.



### ► Involvement with/without Austrian citizenship

The research findings show that mediations in which participants without Austrian citizenship were involved on average achieved more positive results (75 %) than those exclusively involving Austrian citizens (72 %).

In cases of conflict with migrants the offer of carrying out mediation was more frequently taken up than by conflicting parties who were exclusively Austrian citizens. The results for mediations with a positive outcome showed that those with the involvement of residents without Austrian citizenship were higher (61 %) than those with exclusively Austrian participants (53 %).

### Conclusion and prospects

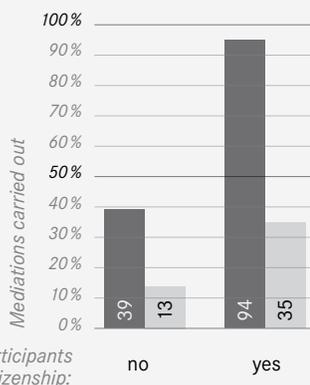
*Risk of escalation reduced by mediation*

Mediative elements such as transparency and measures promoting communication from the housing management of limited-profit housing companies bring about improved residents' satisfaction and thus an improved quality of life – through conflict prevention. Conflicts among residents cannot be completely prevented but the danger of escalation can be reduced by mediation. It enables a relevant degree of solutions to be found and thus increase residents' quality of life.

This study has shown that in the case of conflict, residents without Austrian citizenship are more likely to take up the possibility of solving a dispute by mediation than autochthonous residents and that ultimately a higher number of positive outcomes could also be registered.

### Results of mediation carried out with migrants

■ positive result  
■ negative result



All mediation participants have Austrian citizenship:

Mediative elements in the housing management improve communication between those involved and can contribute to avoiding conflicts and misunderstandings from the start. Mediation helps to limit the negative effects of disputes and reach out to the positive side – namely, further development through conflicts.

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- 1) c.f. Czerny, 2012, p. 41
- 2) Ludl, 1998, p. 349, cit. Raschauer 1994, p. 315
- 3) c.f. Österreicher, 2003, p. 127
- 4) c.f. Wirth, 2003, p. 15
- 5) c.f. Krenauer, 2013, pp. 454–455
- 6) Krenauer, 2013, pp. 453–454
- 7) c.f. Sattmann/Kothbauer, 2004, p. 29
- 8) Krenauer, 2013, pp. 455–456
- 9) c.f. Ludl, 2003, p. 99
- 10) Maderthaner, 2008, pp. 363–364
- 11) c.f. Mehta, 2008, pp. 229–230
- 12) c.f. Bastine, 2014, p. 12
- 13) c.f. Glasl, 2011, pp. 256–262
- 14) Zukunft Europa (Future Europe) – Bundeskanzleramt Austria, 2013–2016
- 15) Magistrat der Stadt Wien (Municipality of Vienna), 2016

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*“The remit for integration can only be met if the development of the mix-ratio of natives and migrants on housing estates is kept under review”  
Photo: VOGUS*



# The Key Issue of Framework Conditions

JOACHIM BRECH / HEIDRUN FEIGELFELD

Concluding observations  
and prospects

The contributions to this book, and especially the study of newer Sozialbau housing estates are an appraisal: can we speak of “good co-existence” of residents of different origins? The result of written questionnaires, interviews and visits is on the whole most positive. At the same time it shows many differences with regard to groups of people, location, age and size of the housing estates as well as critical points. On the basis of this appraisal there are indications for the management of existing housing estates and the planning of new ones.

In existing housing it is a matter of limiting grounds for conflict, mediation and enabling residents’ initiatives on the basis of continual monitoring of life on the estates. For the planning of new housing the approach should be to avoid architectonic elements and spaces which experience has shown lead to conflicts.

The key issue is thus “framework conditions”. A housing company can create them, the rest is in the hands of responsible, active residents, regardless of their origin. The main points are set out below.

## ► *For existing housing*

### **Moderation**

Caretakers and housing managers are in many senses intermediaries. A continually moderated exchange of ideas about experience on individual housing estates can help in overcoming difficulties.

Current efforts on all sides towards “more diversity in public and private services” could result in more people of various origins becoming

caretakers or working in housing management. Caretakers who themselves have a history of migration can build bridges to other migrants and also to Austrian residents.

There is high approval for the local neighbourhoods of housing estates although individual problems should be recognised. Housing companies should also take up the task of bringing together “old and new” in large-scale, inner-city development projects in cooperation with municipal bodies active in the area.

## Mediation

The findings on conflicts and conflict solutions show a clear necessity for the increased expansion of mediation. Mediation should not only first be used when there is reason to intervene but also where potential or latent conflicts are smouldering. In particular, the needs of residents going through difficult phases of life – as is frequently the case with single-parents and the infirm and elderly – should be actively addressed.

## Self-organisation and dialogue with the housing companies

Local levels of autonomous organisation and forms of communication between residents cannot and should not be set up on a “top-down” basis organised by the housing management. However, they can be promoted through “empowerment” – meaning providing structures such as access to digital information media and spaces for meeting – and by encouraging residents’ independent initiatives.

Desirable dialogue between the companies and the residents could be further improved by decentralised information systems (e.g. wider provision of digital information screens on the estates, with apps as well as with more on-the-spot meetings). The greater participation desired could be achieved through the development of creative offers to get involved, of tenants’ representation as well as in other ways.

The potential that has become apparent of integrated residents who have lived here for some time should be “unlocked” for interethnic understanding. They would be good at communicating the necessity for a “give and take” on all sides.

## Places for community

If communal rooms are hardly used over a long period, it would be easy to jump to the conclusion that they are not needed. The opposite is the case: communal rooms of “Sozialbau standard” are important for residents, even if they seldom or never use them. From a spatial point of view they are entrées which help to show that housing is more than just an isolated flat but also life in a community.

## Monitoring and evaluation

Notwithstanding ongoing documentation work about the housing estates on management and allocation level, it would make sense to maintain a structured monitoring system as a prophylactic measure. A broadening to a mix of indicators and a view of the profiles of different types of housing would provide an early warning system for developments and potential problems. Focused evaluations could then serve as periodic checks on the target concepts of the housing companies. This study has already shown an accumulation of negative statements about certain types of housing (according to size or age) or individual housing estates that should be looked into more deeply.

### ► *With new projects*

## Good building planning

Some points of criticism that were raised – such as disturbance through noise or a lack of cleanliness – are very quickly attributed to certain groups of residents, children very generally, migrant children in particular and of course teenagers. Looking more closely at individual housing estates, it can sometimes be seen that the disturbances leading to conflict can hardly be avoided due to the building planning – and one does not want to introduce restrictive provisions for use or even threaten sanctions. Numerous potential trouble spots due to badly thought-out planning were identified on visits – whether it be inadequate soundproofing or echo chambers, insufficiently robust materials, residual niches or rooms with incompatible uses next door to each other. In brief: the planning should be reviewed with a checklist for “social sustainability” to still better avoid potential sources of conflict.

## **The quality of the location and surroundings**

In order to maintain the high degree of satisfaction with the local neighbourhood, as found in the survey, for future larger housing estates and also allow neighbourhood residents to play a part in positive developments, non-profit housing companies should get themselves involved in urban quarter planning at an early stage.

Due to the high demand, housing construction, also by limited-profit companies, should continue in inner-city areas and not only on the periphery. Further building means densification, that is the policy remit. This also includes ethnically concentrated areas. Sozialbau and similar developers can play a key role here on the basis of their experience with interethnic housing.

## **The remit for integration**

The remit for integration can only be met if the development of the “mix-ratio” of Austrians and migrants on housing estates is kept under review. The discussion of a “tolerable mix” in the study “Living Together on Housing Estates” clearly made current limits palpable. It therefore falls to housing companies along with state policy to develop strategies to be sensitive to the foreseeable predominance of residents with a migration background. This applies to the first occupancy of future projects but also to new tenancies in the housing stock. It will be necessary to achieve a balance between older and newer housing so as not to leave the main part of integration work to the latter.



## Further contributions in the German edition / Short abstracts

### **August Gächter / Housing in Urban Transition – Changes in social homogeneity in Vienna**

This contribution traces the links between immigration, social mobility, and cooperative housing over the period from 1981 to 2016. As shown, the expansion of cooperative housing in the 1980s targeted households of workers with upper secondary vocational skills along with middle-level salaried employees, especially in the public sector. Very often these were the upwardly-mobile children, or more likely grandchildren, of immigrants who had arrived before 1925. Recent immigrants did not have the education or occupational standing to be part of this target group. A degree of housing segregation resulted that caused geographic distance to be added to the social distance. From about 2000 this dual distance was important in creating resistance to the integration of recent immigrants or their children into cooperative housing.

### **Margrit Hugentobler/Marie Glaser (CH) / Housing Integration in Zurich – Approaches, measures and exemplary projects**

This article focuses on the problems of social integration of those socially-disadvantaged groups of the foreign population in Switzerland on low incomes and describes current examples of successful approaches to integration in limited-profit housing in Zurich. Due to the federal system, housing provision in Switzerland is in the hands of the cantons and cities. The inclusion of the disadvantaged will increase in importance and urgency, also due to the difficulty of finding and maintaining an affordable flat on the hard-pressed housing markets in Swiss cities. The article presents selected professional non-governmental provisions for support in housing for vulnerable groups in Zurich. Their aim is to provide various housing opportunities and ensure that they are sustainable through targeted housing coaching, conflict prevention and social work on housing estates.

## Housing Estates as Places for Integration

How much “foreignness” can a neighbourhood take? This is one of the central questions in residential construction in the context of access for migrants to subsidised housing.

In 2000 a limited-profit housing association in Vienna attempted the creation of an interethnic housing model. The quality of the architecture and a socially competent caretaker service were identified as starting points for fundamental integrative measures. As shown by an evaluation in 2003, the attempt was successful.

This book presents a new analysis of this housing model from 2016 as well as a comprehensive study by Joachim Brech and Heidrun Feigelfeld of life together on housing estates built since 2000. Contributions by Herbert Ludl (Ed.) and Walter Weiland expand upon the theme.

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