

10 YEARS OF DEVELOPERS' COMPETITION

CHANGES IN HOUSING

(A Study commissioned by MA50 / housing research)

ABSTRACT

This study wants to show the changes housing in Vienna has undergone during the last 20 years. The emphasis will be put on the changes due to the general quality improvement in housing promotion resulting from the developers' competition that has been introduced in 1995. There will also be a valuation of the influence the Building Law of 1996 asking for changes regarding the number of necessary rooms in an apartment has had. 32 projects have been chosen and will be analyzed.

HISTORY

The City of Vienna started with several social housing projects after World War I answering to the serious housing shortage in that period. Whatever was missing in the tiny apartments was added as common housing facilities. Also after World War II quantity in housing came before quality.

Urban planning started to be a main topic in Vienna only in the 50ies. There was the idea of concentrating more on the outskirts in order to distress the situation in the city centre. However, under the aspect of the separation of living and working pure housing estates were built.

The Urban Development Plan of 1984 put the emphasis on a soft urban innovation in the inner-city areas. For the settlement of the urban expansion axes public traffic had to be adapted to the new situation and a new infrastructure developed.

In the 80ies the first ecological trends came up and energy consumption had to be kept low because of increasing oil prices. Small-size buildings with low building height started to be trendy and were appreciated also internationally.

The Vienna Land Procurement and Urban Renewal Fund (WBSF) founded in 1984 established a better control over the land prices and consequently also over the prices of housing.

The increased demand for living space in the 90ies led to a further Urban Development Plan in 1994 in order to continue development along the urban expansion axes. The urban policy aimed at promoting architectural and urban quality granting simultaneous traffic and infrastructure development.

REASONS FOR THE CHANGED SITUATION IN HOUSING

Life style and working situations have remarkably changed over the last 20 years. This social development has its impact also on living. Households are getting smaller and are changing easier. Working-at-home jobs are getting more and more attractive. The increasing number of immigrants and their integration must also be taken into account when housing is planned.

A mix of functions in the urban areas is the target, mixed sites with the possibility of living, working and leisuring are to be created. This would also bring about a social distribution in the housing estates as apartment sizes and financing forms are different.

GENERAL TERMS AND INSTITUTIONS

The Building Law Novella of 1996 simplified §90. Nearly all regulations regarding room size and apartment layout were omitted. In a further novella in 2002 some paragraphs regarding lighting and airing of rooms were changed. A new building law novella regarded barrier-free building.

An essential paragraph was added to the Housing Promotion Act in 1992. The costs for energy forms environmentally compatible are now relevant for housing promotion. Low energy standard has been part of the projects since mid-1996 and is also prerequisite for the allocation of a housing promotion.

The Vienna Land Procurement and Urban Renewal Fund manages the Land Advisory Board and invites tenders for the builders' competition. The fund also buys and sells land developing it in order to make a sale possible. The evaluation of the presented projects is made by a council according to the so-called 3-column model - planning/architecture, economy and ecology. There have been 18 invitations for tenders since 1995.

PROJECT DOCUMENTATION

The 32 project chosen are divided into

- Projects between 1984 and 1995
- Projects evaluated by the Land Advisory Board (after 1995)
- Projects coming from builders' competitions

In order to compare the different examples more efficiently, the projects were additionally divided into

- Building type
- „Access“ (internal hallway, gallery, stairwells)

CHANGES

The changes in housing since the introduction of the developers' competitions, but also since the activity of the Land Advisory Board has started can be presented in 3 groups. The changes of construction regard the planning and the architecture of the building. Urban planning is also important.

The ground floors are meant to be the link between the building and its surrounding. The general boom of skyscraper constructions also influence housing. For the access galleries are most frequently used. Generally there is the tendency to bring as much natural light as possible into corridors and hallways so they are often open.

There is a quality improvement noticeable in the design of open spaces. The quantities of outdoor spaces belonging to the apartments and the availability of common space, although not promoted, have increased. Fitness, sauna and swimming pools are meant to additionally improve the living quality in most skyscraper projects.

The ground plans have become more flexible. Different living needs are satisfied by movable wall sections and rooms that can be assigned to different apartments. The living kitchen which is getting more and more attractive is a direct consequence of these flexible ground plans. A criticism is corridor kitchens leading to the galleries, however there is enough natural light because of the galleries.

The Building Code of 1996 is responsible for the lack of storage space or the decreasing planning of closed anterooms. The shortage of storage room in the apartments can certainly be considered a disadvantage.

Maisonettes and split-level apartments are predominating apartment types. There is the attempt of a social mixing by addressing different occupant groups with different apartment sizes and different promotion. Theme-oriented buildings such as „integrative living“ or „supervised living“ are making special efforts.

Further improvements have been achieved in economy and ecology. In spite of the quality improvement rents have not been increased, neither have the building costs. Apart from the low energy standard generally required, there is also the positive trend towards the passive house. Alternative energy systems, recycling construction material and a possibly low overall degree of sealing are other remarkable quality standards in housing.

CONCLUSION

Aiming to improve housing quality without raising the rents the developers' competition was introduced in 1995. Competitions with topics regarding housing should furthermore push innovation - several engaging projects going beyond the average quality have been the consequence.

The consequent cooperation between developers, architects and executives had led to quality improvement.

The developers' competitions have also contributed to the stable construction costs.

In the future quality documentation will be getting more important as promoted housing is becoming part of the estate market.

An efficient strategy for quality assurance could be the evaluation of realized projects on the basis of a complete documentation about the planning and building process. Changes would be immediately visible and so a positive or negative development of the project could be easier shown up and also justified.

The city of Vienna should continue to promote living room at favourable conditions, also because of increasing expenses in other fields. Innovative products and experiments should be much more discussed in public so the future occupant can get familiar with it.

Theme-oriented competition could be used better for promoting new ideas and concepts. The entire housing would get new inputs. Themes for the following years could be, for example, demographic development, increasing mobility and migration. Because of the positive results of the competitions these instrument will be forced in the future.

Generally the fact is a quite successful 10-year-long history of developers' competition.

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