

# **“Emerging Housing Commons? Vienna’s housing crises then and now.”**

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# Emerging Housing Commons.

## Vienna's housing crises then and now.

### Introduction

In today's cities in crisis housing (re-)emerges as a focal point of neoliberal politics, social inequalities and grassroots struggles. Vienna is often referred to as a – compared to other European cities – safe haven barely touched by crises and with a strong social housing policy (Holm, 2014; Fassmann/ Hatz, 2006; Eigner et al., 1999). This argument is often made with reference to Vienna's interwar time and continued legacy of Red Vienna's strong public intervention in housing provision. Questioning this general discourse I analyze the housing politics and policies of two moments in Vienna's history: the interwar time of the 1920s characterized by Red Vienna politics and recent times characterized by neoliberalizing urban politics. In my analysis I apply the concept of housing commons that I understand as a claim for a dual right to housing: to redistribution of housing space and to self-organization of a home. I thus ask: How can the housing politics and policies of interwar Red Vienna and of neoliberalizing Vienna today be understood in terms of redistribution and self-organization respectively?

Chapter 1 introduces the idea of commons, suggests a conceptualization of what housing commons might entail and depicts the approach applied in my analysis. Applying the conceptual framework of housing commons, I empirically conduct a case study on Vienna as a comparative analysis over time: Chapter 2 looks into the political situation and housing crisis of the 1920s, describes the housing measures Red Vienna set reacting to the crisis and ends with reflecting on them in context of the concept of housing commons. Chapter 3 investigates Vienna at the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century today and describes a very different political situation and housing measures. The chapter asks for a possible re-emerging of a housing crisis and the implications for housing commons. Chapter 4 describes one particular housing movement (Vienna's settlers movement) that started in the crises of 1920s bearing the potentiality of housing commons. The chapter also looks at the heritage of the movement today and how it is affected by current developments. Chapter 5 concludes what can be learned from analyzing two moments in Vienna's history in the perspective of housing commons.

### 1. Crises, politics and commons in the context of housing

#### Potentialities of the concept of commons

Over the last decade the idea of commons has entered many political and theoretical discourses on left. Referring back to Marx' thoughts on primitive accumulation the question of ongoing enclosure of commons through capitalist modes of productions is a central topic leftist literature. Today the discourse on commons has re-emerged in the context of radical ideas of restructuring our capitalist society. In some cases the concept has become a central bearer of hope for leftist though that has been

caught between rejecting both capitalist mode of production as well as real existing state-enforced socialism. Federici (2012) as well as Linebaugh (2008) see the new popularity of commons connected to the success of the Zapatista movement in the 1990s while also stretching that the more neoliberalism is on the rise the more commons are in debate. Harvey (2012) argues recent waves of aggressive privatization and commodification of formerly public resources have additionally fueled the commons debate.

The concept of commons contains a number of potentialities for leftist thought – also for discussing the housing question:

a) Commons encourage to think beyond state-market dichotomies: While definitions and usages of the term greatly vary depending on author and context the basic assumption that is shared in the discourse is that ‘commons’ somehow signify a different property relation than private or state-owned. Commons encompass three elements: a not commodified common pool of resources, a community and a practice connecting the two: ‘commoning’ (De Angelis/ Stavrides, 2010).

b) Commons might be seen as concrete utopias (Bloch, 1974) as they might emerge in the in the everyday practices of people in the here and now as lived alternatives. Nevertheless commoning in everyday practices in the here and now also has an element of futurity, an element that points towards a future beyond capitalist mode of production. (Federici, 2010; De Angelis, 2007).

c) Commons are interconnected with moments of crisis. An example for this definition of urban commons can be found in Stavrides’ (2013, 2014) work on the emergence of commons out of the economic crisis in Athens. He speaks of commoning practices as a mixture of both: everyday survival practices in the crisis of capitalism and practices that prefigure new social relations and new political subjectivities.

### **Housing commons as a dual right to housing**

Following Hodkinson (2012) I hypothesize the concept of commons to be helpful for thinking about how housing could be alternatively organized. The idea of commons might help us to think about housing in this broader sense as a right to housing encompassing two aspects:

1. a right to housing as a right to a housing space and
2. a right to housing as a right to self-organize a home

I talk of a right to housing in the tradition of Lefebvre’s (1968) famous claim of a right to the city that Harvey (2008: 9) summarizes as follows: “The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization.” The distinction between a right to housing as a right to housing space and as a right to self-organize a home is thus only an analytical one as it helps to grasp two intertwined aspects.

A right to housing in the first sense as a right to housing space is discussed in Marxist literature on housing ever since Engels first spoke of the housing question in 1872. The right to housing space refers here primarily to a question of (re-) distribution of space.

The second aspect – a right to self-organize a home – is rather discussed in anarchist and feminist literature. One of the most famous anarchist writers Colin Ward (1976) defines an anarchist house most of all as a self-organized house, where no state control or market interests are at work. An anarchist house is a liberation as it is completely controlled by the dwellers; it is thus in an optimal case also self-built and relies on a strong belief in do-it-yourself ideology and mutual aid. Feminist critique links the right to a home closely to power dynamics: the right to self-organize a home must therefore also include a right to home without violence, without discrimination, without exploitation and also a right to a home as a political place – as for example formulated by bell hooks (1990) writings on black feminism where she claims “homeplace as a site of resistance”. Ideas of home vary along the lines of cultural and social position as home is a place where questions of race, gender, sexuality, ability intersect and a right to define one’s own home must take these intersections into account.

#### **Housing politics, crises and commons**

As Stavrides (2013, 2014) argues commons might emerge out of emergency situations in crises and thus also housing commons might be connected to housing crises. Ideas on how to define a housing crisis can be found already in Engels work on the housing question. In his studies on the housing situation of the working class in London Engels observes a “peculiar intensification” of the problematic situation in rapid urbanization and industrialization of his time: “a colossal increase in rents, a still further aggravation of overcrowding in the individual houses, and, for some, the impossibility of finding a place to live in at all.” (Engels, 1872) Holm (2012) extracts three dimensions out of Engels writing: first the housing question has a quantitative dimension concerning the question if there are at all enough housing units for all different housing needs. Second there is a qualitative dimension about the equipment standard and (over)crowdedness of housing units. Third the housing question has a legal dimension concerning property laws and rent contracts. In contrast to the Viennese economist Emil Sax, Engels always saw the housing question as intrinsically connected to the commodification of housing in general: “It is not the solution of the housing question which simultaneously solves the social question, but only by the solution of the social question, that is, by the abolition of the capitalist mode of production, is the solution of the housing question made possible.” (Engels, 1872)

#### **Analyzing Vienna in the perspective of housing commons**

Commodification and de-commodification of housing and the emergence as well as mitigation of housing crises are questions connected to changing (urban) politics. The following chapters focus on housing politics and policies and ask what kind of context they might provide for housing crises and housing commons: What did the housing politics and policies of the interwar time mean for a right to housing space and a right to a home? What do housing politics and policies today imply for these two rights? In terms of methods used in the following analysis the chapters are based on slightly variegating

approaches: chapter 2 on the historic moment in Vienna is based on literature review and archival research; chapter 3 on present-day Vienna works with secondary data analysis and literature review; and chapter 4 on the settlers housing movement is based on literature review, archival research and qualitative interviews.

## **2. Crisis, politics and commons in Vienna's housing system of the interwar time**

### **The housing crisis in context**

Like other European cities at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Vienna too faced a massive housing crisis especially after WWI. The developments leading up to this substantial crisis in housing in 1918/1919 in Vienna are manifold: first Vienna experienced rapid urban growth around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Between 1840 and 1918 Vienna's population grew from 440.000 to more than two million mainly because Vienna was the capital of a the large Austrian-Hungarian monarchy and thus the center for the proletarianization of rural people. Second the housing market was completely privatized and monopolized in the hands of private landlords (Feldbauer, 1976); private investment however seemed unprofitable because high construction costs exceeded largely what the majority of the new urban proletariat could afford and thus a shortage of housing formed (Bauböck 1979). Of course the war worsened the already catastrophic conditions of the pre-war time further: housing costs rose through war-related dissolutions of household structures and increased joblessness. Furthermore housing construction came to an almost standstill during war time (ibid.: 23). After the war the general economic situation of the new republic of Austria had collapsed. Austria was cut off from all essential supplies from the former monarchy region, especially from coal for industrial production, that came to an almost stand-still; unemployment was massive and rising; food shortages especially in Vienna were severe (Blau 1999). Looking at housing all aspects characterizing a crisis – according to Holm's (2012) reading of Engels – were affecting Vienna at the time: housing shortages, bad housing qualities and insecure tenure laws.

a) Housing shortage: a first indication for a housing shortage is visible in declining housing construction, but increasing population in the interwar time when people moved to Vienna from former monarchy regions (Bauböck 1979). The shortage is also visible in the over-crowdedness of apartments at the time reflected in 170.000 of subtenants and so-called *Bettgeher\_innen*<sup>1</sup> already in 1910; in 1919 there were around 90.000 homeless people (Eigner et al. 1999: 5f.).

b) Bad housing quality: The quality of housing was furthermore rather low for large amounts of the population: because there was no public plan for providing housing for the new-comers to the city, low-income households depended on private market solutions: cheaply constructed so-called *Bassena*-housing was built in the outskirts of the city (around the *Gürtel* road): the houses were called *Bassena* (eng. water basin) to indicate that there was no running water in the housing units but only at the corridor; furthermore the units were dark, small and often unsanitary. (Blau, 1999)

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<sup>1</sup> *Bettgeher\_innen* are people who rented only a bed during the time when the main tenant was at work.

c) Insecure tenure: The turn of the century, the pre-war years and also most of the war time knew no tenant laws. According to John (1982) the time was characterized by very strong political positions of the landlords while there was no legal acknowledgment of tenants' rights: there were no restrictions on rents and tenancy agreements could be terminated at any time. In 1917 however – still in monarchy and war time – the emperor implemented a first tenancy law: in response to the tense social situation at the time and in fear of riots and revolts (Stampfer, 1995) the “Verordnung des Gesamtministeriums über den Schutz der Mieter” included a rent cap and security of tenure as temporary measures until the end of 1918.

### **The political program of Red Vienna**

After the war in November 1918 the Republic of German-Austria was declared and in February 1919 the first national elections saw the Social Democratic Workers Party (SDAP) emerging as the strongest force. The electoral victory of the SDAP was strongly linked to the support of Vienna's proletariat while the conservative Christian Socials had a strong standing in all rural regions. Thus a coalition government was formed that was dissolved again in 1920 and in new elections the Christian-Social party won clearly. The power of the SDAP was thus restricted to Vienna where they held the absolute majority. In 1922 Vienna became a federal state, which gave the municipality constitutional independence preparing the way for Vienna's own policies and fiscal sovereignty in a political experiment of municipal socialism that came to be known as Red Vienna. (Blau, 1999)

Ideologically the politics of Red Vienna were based on Austro-Marxism – a strain of Marxist thought mainly brought forward by a group of intellectuals at University of Vienna including Max Adler, Otto Bauer, Rudolf Hilferding and (seldom mentioned) Tatiana Grigorovici. Major theoretical publications were published as *Marx-Studien* between 1904 until 1923 but almost all Austro-Marxists were also closely interlinked with the political practice of the time: they held key positions in the SDAP and contributed to the monthly journal ‘Der Kampf’ as well as the daily newspaper ‘Arbeiter-Zeitung’. Otto Bauer was clearly the chief ideologist of Red Vienna with his reformist approach to the social revolution called ‘integral socialism’. According to Bauer (1936) ‘revolution through reform’ or ‘slow revolution’ can't be accomplished on the street but only through creative legislation and administration, through a process of *Hineinwachsen* (Eng. grow slowly into socialism). Austro-Marxism was based on parliamentary democracy, a belief in the active role of ideology and cultural values in social change: the working class should reach its historical role through education, social policy and parliamentary politics. On this idea of educating the workers to become socialists the concrete political measures of Red Vienna were based. Due to the reformist approach and the limitation of not having the legislative power at the national level socialization took mostly place in the sphere of reproduction (Gerlich, 1980): the workers leisure, cultural and domestic life. Administrative and tax reforms formed the basis for the establishment of a cradle-to grave public health and welfare system and an intense (workers) culture program. But by far the biggest intervention was the housing program of Red Vienna that affected the existing private market housing stock as well as an outstanding municipal building project.

### Private rental market

The political intervention on the private rental market to address the housing crisis consisted of two main measures: a rent control act for affordability and an expropriation law (*Wohnungsanforderung*) to allow for re-distribution of housing space.

a) Federal Rent Control Act of 1922: Interestingly the measures concerning the private rental market were taken on a national level where the conservative Christian Socials were the ruling party and not the SDAP. The argumentation of SDAP city councilor for housing Anton Weber reflects the political emphasis on subsidizing the economy through rent control over socialist ideas of redistribution: "Our competitiveness can only be maintained by relatively low wages (...) There is only one element that can be eliminated from the worker's wages without the necessity of stepping up his productivity. That is rent." (quoted in Blau, 1999: 138) Main element of the rent control act was the so-called *Friedenszins* (Eng. peace rent) that cut the rent for every apartment to half of the annual rent that was paid in pre-war 1914. In addition there had to be some rent paid for maintenance, operating costs and taxes. (Bundesgesetz, 1922). According to Bauböck (1979) the division of the rent into several components had the benefit of making possible surpluses for the owners transparent and thus controllable. Because of the inflation of the currency immediately after the war the orientation on pre-war rents meant very low housing costs for tenants. This is reflected in clearly decreased housing costs burdens of Vienna's working class households that amounted to almost 15% before the war and had been decreased to 2% after the war (see Bauböck 1979: 64). Low housing costs that were clearly outstanding in Europe at the time where the average housing cost burden was around 13% (ibid.: 65).

b) Expropriation law from 1922: Together with the rent control act also a national law for compulsory acquisition of housing units under certain conditions was passed. As Bauböck (1997) points out a central idea of this law was that a rent control act alone while increasing affordability for established tenants might decrease the accessibility of the market: as housing cost burdens were so low and contracts not limited in time there was almost no mobility on the market. The situation was especially problematic for the huge amount of precarious subtenants who were in threat of homelessness as rents were affordable for the main tenants alone. The *Wohnungsanforderung* law in Vienna in 1922 doesn't abolish private property rights altogether but tackles property regimes under certain circumstances: First housing units could be expropriated when they were vacant or unused. Second housing fell under the expropriation law when living space was classified as 'underused' as for example when households had double apartments or if the number of rooms exceeded the people living in one apartment<sup>2</sup>. Until 1925<sup>3</sup> more than 60.000 housing units were re-distributed in Vienna in this way (Czeike, 1959: 24).

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<sup>2</sup> More precisely housing space was considered 'underused' when there were more rooms than people only in apartments with a minimum of three household members or in apartments with more than three rooms but only one person living there. (Bundesgesetz, 1922)

<sup>3</sup> In 1925 the *Wohnungsanforderungs*-law was abolished again.

## Public housing

One consequence of the strict rent control act was that there was almost no private housing construction as there was no profit to be made. The city of Vienna reacted to this situation with the centerpiece of Red Vienna's politics: the public housing program. The building program was launched in 1923 and aimed at building 1000 units in one year. However the city managed to build 2.500 units in the first year and inspired by this success established the first five-year plan to build 25.000 housing units. Up until the Austro-fascist coup in 1934 there have been a total of 64.125 housing units built; translating to an increase in housing resource by 11% in only 15 years of governing. (Hautmann/ Hautmann, 1980)

The housing program built on two main political measures. The first important aspect was the re-organization of the city's finances and introduction of a housing taxation system: in 1923 the city established a tax on rents to be paid by all tenants but in a sharply graded logic varying from 2% on average working-class apartments up to 55% on luxury apartments (Bauböck, 1979: 131). According to Blau (1999: 138) the 90 most expensive rental properties paid as much tax as did the 350.000 least expensive ones. The Viennese SDAP saw taxation as the prime measure for re-distribution and introduced additional taxes on real estate, capital gains, investment and luxury goods (Czeike, 1958). The other important aspect was the question of land acquisition by the city. As there was no expropriation law for land, the city had to buy land on the market – land prices though were kept low by the rent control act. In 1929 an additional law was introduced that allowed the city to expropriate unsanitary buildings and small lots of land in the inner city. By 1918 the municipality owned 17% of the urban area of Vienna but by 1931 the SDAP had managed to double the city's real estate holdings (Blau, 1999: 139).

Housing was constructed mainly in the style of so-called super-blocks to indicate the (new) power of the proletariat, like for example the famous *Karl-Marx-Hof*. In the first housing program there were only two types of apartments built: one with 38m<sup>2</sup> consisting of a living-room with an open kitchen and one sleeping room and the other with 48m<sup>2</sup> and an additional sleeping room. In stark contrast to the former *Bassena* housing all units had running water, a private bathroom, a toilet and a small private vestibule marking the distance between the public hallway and the private apartments. The new buildings were also not densely built but with a lot of green areas and courtyards following the guiding principle of 'light, air and sun'. Most housing super-blocks had a lot of communal facilities like laundry rooms, baths, libraries, rooms for political organization and debate, kindergartens, schools and counseling offices for parents – all communal facilities were administered by the city of Vienna. In general administration of the new housing blocks was hierarchical and centralized with district and block supervisors to oversee standards of cleanliness and 'orderliness'. (Sieder, 1985)

In the new constructed public housing rents amounted to around 3-4% of an average worker's income (Blau, 1999: 139); this was achieved by regarding the construction costs as deficiencies and basing rents only on maintenance and operating costs. In addition in case of illness of a worker rent payments were stopped, so that tenants would not get evicted (Weihsmann, 2002). The allocation of apartments was



based on a point system evaluating the urgency of need: points were granted depending on Austrian citizenship, residency in Vienna, marital status, number of children, illness and disability, overcrowdedness and number of subtenants. Those who were homeless or under direct threat of losing their homes were given priority while unmarried people were altogether excluded from the highest class of neediness. (Blau, 1999)

### **Red Vienna and housing commons?**

How can the housing situation in Red Vienna be analyzed in the perspective of housing commons? Coming back to the conceptualization of commons as a dual right to housing in chapter 2 I will discuss in the following the housing situation in Vienna's interwar time first in the perspective of a right to housing space and second in the perspective of a right to define a home.

#### a) Red Vienna and a right to housing space:

The city set a lot of measures in terms of redistributing housing space to people who had none or too little: a) the rent control act enabled tenants to stay in apartments and frees them from forced subtenants and thus over-crowdedness, b) the expropriation law was a direct measure of counteracting an unequal distribution of space and c) the public housing program aimed at providing housing space for the homeless and those in overcrowded and poor quality housing, financed by a sharply graded taxation system it is also a redistributive measure.

Looking at sheer numbers it's apparent that a program of around 64.000 housing units in a city with more than two million inhabitants couldn't provide enough housing space for all in need. Thus the question of redistribution is inevitably linked to another one, namely the question to whom space should be redistributed: who constitutes the entity for redistributive politics? Looking at Red Vienna's housing program we see a system aimed at distributing housing space to the working class via low rents. But there was rent to pay nevertheless and thus exclusion based on income and wealth couldn't be completely eliminated. Going even further Fraser (1995) speaks in this context of the problematic of recognition: Who remains invisible when looking for injustices only in the perspective of socio-economic mal-distribution? Who suffers from injustices in forms of cultural misrecognition like domination, non-recognition or disrespect? The system of allocation of housing in Red Vienna is indicative in this context: additionally to criteria to measure the distribution of housing space of a household it also introduced criteria based on certain ideas about society: first Austrian citizens were favored over others as were Viennese residents and second family politics favored married couples over unmarried ones and single persons. Other models of living together remained completely unseen.

#### b) Red Vienna and a right to define a home:

In terms of self-organization of tenants to define their own homes Red Vienna's housing program left little free space. Like the allocation also the administration of housing was centrally and hierarchically organized. In line with the ideological foundations of Austro-Marxism to create a 'new human' to grow into socialism Reinprecht et al. (2008: 36) observe: "Social housing became a central tool not only for combating the housing-related misery of the working and popular classes in the aftermath of World War

I, but also more broadly for stimulating mass educational and moral reform.” Sieder (1985) agrees and argues that the housing program was not simply a mean of fulfilling the need for housing space but also a central element in the educational socialist policies of Red Vienna: a home should be a good environment for the male work force to recover and for the female care worker to look after the children. In the council housing – according to Sieder (1985) – surveillance was high: inspectors would control the cleanliness of the apartments and overlook activities in the courtyards. Also the laundry rooms used mainly by female house workers were under (male) surveillance and times for most of the reproductive works like bathing, carpet dusting or waste disposal were centrally set. In correspondence with new ideals of health care and hygiene a new form of social control was forming against non-conform people – those who lived in extreme poverty, unemployed or with alcoholism (ibid.: 46). The housing program did not include any kinds of experimentations in self-organization of housing but on the contrary has meant the transformation of overcrowded and poor but diverse household structure in the *Bassena* housing to what Weihsmann (2002) calls the bourgeoisification of the working class and thus in its core a ‘counter-revolutionary housing program’.

### **3. Crisis, politics and commons in Vienna’s housing system today**

#### **General situation**

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Vienna is facing a very different social, economic and political situation: after decades of post-war welfare state politics had kept substantial parts of the legacy of Red Vienna alive, political changes begun in the 1980s and 1990s. Vienna lost its financial sovereignty in 1950 and the post WWII times were characterized both nationally as on the city scale by a locally specific form of Fordism. Nationally after the war a so-called ‘grand coalition government’ was formed between the former SDAP (now SPÖ) and the former Christian-Socials (now ÖVP). In the spirit of avoiding conflicts between the two political forces SPÖ and ÖVP and in a common effort to move away from Nazi-times<sup>4</sup> the idea of social partnership became a central motif in the government. In this spirit unions, business associations and other large organization were strongly linked to one of the social partners respectively and a system of very strong corporatism formed. Economically an internal mass market was establishing with labor markets where real wages increased and per capita GDP growth was above Western average (Becker/ Novy, 1999: 135). At the city level the SPÖ held a total majority during most of the post-war times. Urban administration was a public and huge apparatus whose main function was to distribute local welfare state services of which a main area was housing (Matznetter, 2002). According to Becker and Novy (1999) top down (welfare) policies depoliticized the civil society and opposing social movements were pacified.

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<sup>4</sup> For this it is important to bear in mind that Austria has been claiming to be the first victim of Nazi-Germany and has for a long time denied its Nazi past and thus not engaged in processing the past.

Changes have begun around the time of the fall of the iron curtain and increased since Austria's EU membership in 1995: nationally the grand coalition government still prevailed most of the time but their politics changed towards increased internationalization of economic activities, weakened corporatism, slow eroding of labor market politics and the dismantling of the welfare state (Becker/ Novy, 1999; Tálos, 2005). Changes also translated to the city level where the mayor is up until today from the SPÖ but politics changed nevertheless: "The end of Red Vienna consisted not in electoral defeats, but in using controlled modernization to empower business interest and abandon strategies of socializing public service delivery and democratizing the economy." (Novy/ Hammer, 2007: 213). Slowly Vienna emerged as the Austrian center for foreign direct investment, privatization of public administration occurred, large-scale urban development projects were carried out in public-private partnerships (like Donau City, the new Central Rail Station and the Seestadt Aspern) and investment in real estate was encouraged (Novy, 2011). But how have these social, economic and political changes on the national and city level translated to changes in the housing system?

### **Private rental market**

On the private rental market the neoliberalization of politics led to measures to re-commodify the housing market. Two policy changes are characteristic here. (Verlic/ Kadi, 2015; Kadi, 2015)

#### **a) Rent deregulation**

From the strict rent regulations of the interwar time onwards deregulation on the national level took place gradually since WWII with reforms in 1955, 1968 and 1974 that affected different smaller areas of the housing stock (Rosifka, 2014). Importantly new constructed private rental housing was exempted from rent regulation and thus only security of tenure measures were active there. Rent regulation only affects the part of the private rental market that was built before 1945<sup>5</sup>: in Vienna this is up until today the vast majority of apartments as from 280.000 private rental apartments around 220.000 have been constructed before 1945 (ibid.). In 1982 a new system was introduced dividing apartments into four categories depending to their equipment status and fixing rents accordingly<sup>6</sup>. The reform of 1994 however meant a major step in deregulating rents in Austria: the system of categories was abolished and replaced by a system that compares each housing unit to a fictive 'standard home'. Extra charges can be added if the unit is 'better' than the standard home. The criteria for this comparison are apartment-related aspects but landlords are not obliged to specify the reasons for premiums they ask. (MRG, 2015) Furthermore the law made it possible to ask for extra charges for location factors that have become decisive factors in rent increases especially in the aftermath of the economic crises of 2007 (Kadi, 2015). According to Rosifka and Postler (2010) the new rent regulation system generally makes it much easier to ask market rates for a unit compared to the older system. Next to making rents more flexible the reform in 1994 also replaced the norm of unlimited rental contracts with the possibility for

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<sup>5</sup> Hoses built before 1945 meant in effect before 1919 as there was almost no private building activity between 1919 and 1945.

<sup>6</sup> The Viennese "Kategoriemietzins" system differentiated between four categories of equipment of a unit – ranging from category A (kitchen, toilet, modern bathroom, heating and boiler) down to category D (no water-tap and toilet inside of the unit). Rents were regulated accordingly at 22 Schilling/m<sup>2</sup> for category A and 5,5 Schilling/m<sup>2</sup> for category D. (Blaas, 1991: 151)

limited contracts. Landlords now could give out either five or three year contracts and tenants were obliged to leave the apartment after that period or agree to a new contract with the landlord.

#### b) Urban renewal in private-public partnerships

Up until the 1980s private landlords were in many cases unwilling to renovate housing in Vienna in light of the lacking opportunities to raise rents leaving many of the pre-war houses in rather poor condition. In 1985 the 'Soft Urban Renewal Act' was incorporated into the urban development plan. Central idea of the program was to give low-interest loans to private landlords as incentive for renovation. In exchange, landlords had to agree to keep rents low for 15 years after renovation. On the one hand the program has made a significant contribution to the upgrading of the city's housing stock: between 1991 and 2001 the share of substandard apartments decreased considerable from 28% to 10% (Fassmann/ Hatz, 2006: 10). On the other hand the urban renewal program also meant attracting private capital back into the market and thus adding to the re-commodification of the segment: but as landlords are only obliged to keep rents low for 15 years after renovation they are able to capitalize upon their publically-funded investments after this time period. While it is thus clear that in a longer term the urban renewal act leads to higher rents, according to Hatz (2004) already in the short time the renewal program increased pressure on tenants to leave their apartments. In general the public renewal program aided to attract private investments into the market: Looking at investments in the segment of the old housing stock under rent regulation we see that investment has been increasing constantly since the 1990s and that there is shift in ownership away from single house owners to real estate companies (OTTO, 2013). This is also reflected in profound price increases: A study by IFIP (2012: 62) found that the purchase price for one m<sup>2</sup> has risen by 153% between 2000 and 2010.

#### **Public and non-profit housing**

Also the public housing sector – once the centerpiece of Red Vienna's political program – experienced fundamental changes. After decades of decreasing construction activities in 2004 the city of Vienna has completely terminated the construction of council housing. Since then, no new housing units were built directly by the municipality. While in contrast to many Western cities Vienna did not privatize its public housing, the stop of further construction has meant that in relative terms the stock has ever since been shrinking. The set of criteria for the allocation of housing units of the existing stock of public housing (which still amounts to over 220.000 units) has been re-formulated but is based on similar criteria as in the interwar time. As a new factor (rather lose) income limits have been defined<sup>7</sup>. Apart from that applicants have to live in 'sorted' family structures with their partners, they have to be registered in one apartment in Vienna for at least two years and they have to fulfill at least one of a set of social criteria (overcrowded home, unsanitary home, illness and disability, being under 30 and without an own flat,

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<sup>7</sup> For example a single person is allowed to have a net income of 3.140€/ month (a household of three up to 5.297 €/ month). In comparison employees in Vienna have an average income of 2.067€/ month with 90% earning less than 3.571€. (Statistik Austria 2015)

unable to live with partner). Only since 2006 you can apply for public housing without being an Austrian citizen. (Wiener Wohnen, 2015).

Generally there has been a strong shift since the 1960s already in social housing building activities away from public housing by the municipality to a system of housing subsidies: the Austrian system of subsidizing housing is based mainly on direct subsidies in the form of loans and allowances that are allocated by the federal states (and Vienna is a federal state of itself) to non-profit construction corporations (Fröhlich, 2012). Public housing construction more and more declined and in the 1990s more than two thirds of all social housing came from non-profit housing corporations. In this system public subsidies are given to non-profit corporations who are in return bound to social criteria in providing housing. Overall the corporations are not allowed to make profit and obliged to re-invest into housing construction. Concerning rent regulations non-profit corporations are only allowed to charge cost rent levels. An important difference to public housing however is the fact that a down payment is required by tenants when moving into an apartment. With rising land prices in Vienna in recent years, the required amount for a down payment is around 500 €/m<sup>2</sup> which amounts to around 30.000€ for a 60 m<sup>2</sup> flat (Korab et al., 2010: 9). Another important regulatory change is the introduction of a right-to-buy in parts of the non-profit housing stock, especially newly constructed housing leading to the privatization of parts of the social housing stock (Mundt, 2008).

#### **Vienna's new housing crisis**

Coming back to the criteria by Holm (2012) for evaluating the existence of a housing crisis we see the following developments today:

a) Housing shortage: A general accessibility problem of the affordable segments of the housing market characterizes Vienna today: long waiting lists and discriminatory criteria block access to public housing, while in the non profit sector down-payments pose a financial barrier to many. As a result poor households need to turn to the private rental market where high rents await them. In Vienna rents rose by 37% over the last ten years and increases are highest in the private rental stock that was subject to deregulation: rents in this sector were 67% higher in 2010 than in 2000 (Tockner, 2012). Newer contracts are most affected: on average between 1998 and 2001 rents in new contracts were about 20% higher than existing ones (Amann/ Schuster, 2004: 35). But also in existing rent contracts affordability is a problem as studies indicate (IFES, 2010; IFES, 2014). In summery accessibility and affordability problems can be seen as indications for a shortage in affordable housing.

b) Bad housing qualities: while quantitatively the amount of overcrowded or unsanitary housing conditions seems incomparable to the times of the housing crises at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it seems important to analyze the market in greater detail: a recent study has found that housing conditions of first and second generation migrants are facing profoundly worse than average housing conditions (Hoser et al., 2015). As of recently Austria is housing asylum seekers in tents and prisons (Brickner, 2015).

c) Insecure tenure: Although there is an existing rent regulation law for a large part of the private rental market in Vienna there are strong signs that the new rent regulation law is largely ineffective. As data from 2011 shows rents in regulated units were on average as high as in unregulated units (WIFO, 2012: 81). A study from 2010 (Rosifka/ Postler 2010: 35) based on a sample of 350 units in Vienna found that in 99 % of all cases rents were on average 67% higher than the rent regulation law would allow. The failing of the rent regulation can probably be linked to a lack of clarity in the law that makes it almost impossible for tenants to evaluate themselves if their rent is too high. Furthermore also security of tenure is under threat in Vienna today as an average of seven evictions per day indicates (BAWO, 2011). Additionally several cases have been recently in the media where private landlords illegally tried to pressure tenants to move out of their apartments against their will in order to terminate old rent contracts, renovate the whole building and increase rents in new contracts (see. e.g. Gebhard, 2012; Putschögl, 2012)

### **Housing in Vienna today and housing commons?**

What can we say about the Viennese housing system today in the perspective of housing commons as a dual right to housing space and to define a home?

#### a) Vienna today and the right to housing space

In terms of a social redistribution of housing space there are ambivalent political forces active in the housing system. On the private rental market a rent regulation law is existing for the majority of housing in Vienna but it is undermined by the introduction of deregulating measures like imprecise formulations, manifold possibilities of extra charges, high charges for central locations and limited rent contracts to three or five years. In the segment of public and non-profit housing on the one hand the city of Vienna spends the large annual sum of around 450 Mio. €<sup>8</sup> for housing subsidies that go mainly into funding housing construction of non-profit corporations bound to certain social criteria. On the other hand the city of Vienna has stopped building public housing itself and non-profit corporations ask down payments and introduced a right-to-buy.

#### b) Vienna today and the right to define a home

Long waiting lists for public housing, down payments in non-profit housing and deregulated rents lead to exclusion from housing space redistribution on the basis of income and wealth resources. Furthermore public housing allocation policies actively discriminate against people living in non-standard household constellations and against non-Austrian citizens and people without a stable housing unit in Vienna. Studies show that especially migrants of first or second generation face problematic conditions on the Viennese housing market: they are more often confronted with overcrowded housing, bad housing quality, affordability problems and limited rent contracts (Hoser et al., 2015) The huge bureaucratic apparatus of distributing housing as a welfare service doesn't allow for self-organization and experimentations in housing. Measures against alternative housing movements

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<sup>8</sup> Numbers vary between 736,1 Mio. € in 2000 and 458,9 Mio. € in 2001 (Fröhlich, 2012: 12).

like political squatters or trailer parks are generally repressive. Schrage (2011) speaks of a carrot and stick approach by the city offering welfare and housing subsidize to some while repressing others. The following chapter will take a closer look at one specific housing movement in Vienna – the settlers' movement.

#### **4. Close-up: Viennese settlers – a movement for housing commons?**

This chapter looks in more detail at the story of the so-called settlers' movement in Vienna, one specific housing movement that started out of Vienna's interwar time housing crisis. The story of the movement is indicative for the comparison of the housing situation in Vienna's interwar time and today: first it shows how in a time of crisis in the interwar period potentialities for housing commons emerged and were soon institutionalized and incorporated in the local state. Second the chapter investigates the situation of the heritage of the movement today and finds dramatically increased housing costs and privatization.

##### **The settlers' movement in the interwar time: wild beginnings and institutionalization**

Immediately after WWI in 1919 when the housing and food crises was on its peak in Vienna people set out from their overcrowded and low-quality housing conditions to the outskirts of the city: some just to pick wood, some to find wild-growing food, some to take land to cultivate vegetables and fruit and some to build up little sheds to live in. Not much is known today about this early phase of what is later called the settlers' movement but we know that it lasted only until 1921 when institutionalization of the movement in form of cooperative structures is documented. Nevertheless different authors claim different ideological motifs for this mass movement of self-organized settlers; the broad range of ideologies spans from left to right including anarchism, socialism, life reforms, inner-colonialization and garden city ideas.

For example Gautsch (2015) emphasizes the anarchist political motivations of parts of the settlers, most prominently the *Bund herrschaftsloser Sozialisten* (Eng. association of socialists without rule). The association was founded in 1918 and propagated the idea of settlements that would be seeds for a new society. After organizing the first settlers' conference in 1919 the association started building their own settlement in 1920 (called 'Eden'). From the beginning on the settlement couldn't be realized as an only anarchist project however as the association had little to no financial means. According to Zimmerl (2002) in this settlement as in others revolutionary groups of socialists, communists and anarchists joined together with bourgeois groups of former soldiers and public officials who were followers of the *Lebensreformbewegung* (Eng. life reform movement). The life reform movement started in the 19th century mainly in Switzerland and Germany and followed the idea of returning back to nature opposing massive urbanization and industrialization of the time. Ideas like vegetarianism, naturists and naturopathy were prominent in the movement that was often also religiously motivated.<sup>9</sup> Baptist

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<sup>9</sup> Many publications deal with the life reform movement in Germany (see e.g. Linse, 1983; Kerbs/ Reulecke, 1998) while Austria isn't featured prominently; for the parallels and continuations of main ideas of the movement in Nazi ideology see Krabb (1989).

religious groups (Gautsch, 2015) have been very active at the time in Vienna and also Quakers as for example the history of the settlement *Wolfersberg* shows: in a brochures of the settlers association on the history of the settlement (Trübswasser, 2014) a woman called Aline Atherton-Smith is referred to as the 'foster mum' of the settlement. Atherton Smith who published on the settlers' movement in Vienna in the 1920s was part of a Quaker organization called 'Friends Council for International Services'<sup>10</sup>. The organization financially supported settlers' movements all over Europe because they saw an important potentiality in those movements: altruism would form out of an emergency situation and would lead to internationalism of a movement for peace (Atherton-Smith, 1924). Furthermore the Quaker organization shared ideological assumptions with another popular idea of the interwar time, the so-called 'inner-colonialization'<sup>11</sup>. Followers of the idea of inner-colonialization, which was very popular in Germany<sup>12</sup>, argued against urban and industrial life forms and for the return to an agricultural society. Agricultural statistics would show that only the active re-settlement of proletarian urban population to the countryside could feed all people of the society (see e.g. for Austria: Vogel, 1919). The inner-colonialization idea was – although it had some interconnections to other anti-capitalist leftist movements – a conservative one: In contrast to leftists groups the followers of inner-colonialization where not in favor of expropriation of great land owners and envisioned a return to small households agriculture of feudal times rather than new ways of communal working in collective farms (Hoffmann, 1987). Other authors connect the settlers' movement to a socialist or socio-democratic ideology: Förster (1979) and Novy and Förster (1991) describe the beginning of the settlers' movement as a poor people movement out of a socio-economic emergency situation where most of the settlers were proletarians and the ideology of the SDAP prevailed. They argue that the scheme for institutionalizing the movement from 1921 on into cooperative structures was superimposed by the city administration as an answer to the settlers' claim for the squatted land that they built their sheds and houses on. According to Novy and Förster (1991) the idea of cooperative organization fell on fertile ground however as most of the settlers were already organized in unions or consumer cooperatives. In the light of so manifold ideas and ideologies present or imposed on the wild beginnings of the settlers' movement Mesner (2015) generally doubts that there was a dominant ideology or socio-economic background unifying the settlers in this early phase of the movement: "The settlement movement was so heterogeneous that basically there was no settlement movement, but very many different ideas and ideologies in the background of various groups."

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10 Today the organization is called „Quaker Peace and Social Witness“ and still active internationally in peace and social work as part of ‚Quakers in Britain‘.

11 At a time where colonial politics were supported and glorified in Western nations, the term inner-colonialization must also be thought in this context: in contrast to motifs for colonial imperialism the inner-colonialization seems to be less driven by ideas of 'going into the wild' and discovering 'new areas' of the world but rather by a reactionary idea of agrarian romanticism and a right way of living in nature (Hoffmann, 1987). Nevertheless overlapping of inner-colonialization ideas and colonial ideology in general would be an interesting point for further investigations.

12 Another popular idea in Germany at the time that originally came from England was the idea of garden cities brought forward mainly by Ebenezer Howard. The idea was also brought to Austria from Germany most prominently by Hans Kampffmeyer who was later on active in the institutionalization of the settlers' movement (see. e.g. Kampffmeyer, 1908).



However the ideological foundations might have been there is a unison diagnosis that after only two years of unorganized settlements an outstandingly quick development of institutionalization occurred that was ideologically based on the ideas of guild socialism. As a chief ideologist for the Austrian version of guild socialism Otto Neurath emerged who joined the settlers movement in an early stage and in 1921 founded the Austrian associations of settlers and gardeners ÖVSK (ÖSV, 2015; Neurath, 1922). Organized in this national association and often also in smaller associations of neighboring settlers people started to publically demand help from the city to obtain the land they had squatted: between 1919 and 1922 mass demonstrations of between 50.000 and 100.000 people gathered in front of the city hall claiming: "Gebt uns Land, Holz und Stein, wir machen Brot daraus!" (Engl. "Give us land, wood and stones, we will make bread out of it!") (Zimmerl, 2002: 73). Already in 1921 a department for settlements in the city administration was founded with Hans Kampffmeyer – famous follower of the garden city idea – as head of department and Adolf Loos as the chief architect of the settlers' movement. The department was in charge of helping settlers to find land, giving out loans from a newly established settlers' fund and inspecting constructions. In only a few months time the Austrian association of settlers and gardeners together with the city of Vienna and federal government founded a cooperative provider for construction material (*GESIBA*); furthermore they established a construction guild (*Grundstein*) and a cooperative provider of cheap furniture (*Warentreuhand*). (Zimmerl, 2002; Blau 1999) After 1921 and the institutionalization of the movement also housing construction and allocation changed: houses were no longer built as self-made shags but plans were established for the new settlements and architects were organized by the association of settlers and the department for settlements to plan the single-story houses and gardens for food production. In most of the settlements planned by the settlers' association people could contribute labor power for construction instead of money – a practice referred to as 'Muskelhypothek' (Eng. muscle loan) according to Sedlak (2015). For example in the settlement *Am Rosenhügel* every household had to invest 2.000 hours of labor before they were eligible to get a house.<sup>13</sup> Lots were then drawn to allocate houses to people to guarantee that building effort for all houses was equal. Additionally to working on their own homes settlers also had to contribute labor to the communal facilities like meeting halls, childcare centers and theaters. The number of houses and shags constructed in the unorganized beginnings of the settlers' movement is hard to estimate (as many have also been taken down again or re-built later on). Around 3000 houses for 10.000 people were built between 1921 and 1925 when the movement was institutionalized and supported by the city of Vienna (Novy/ Förster, 1991: 30). From 1923 on the politics of the city of Vienna changed: the construction of settlement houses was incorporated into the first five year housing program by the city and houses were soon built without participation of the cooperative institutions.

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13 Within the social democrats and socialists the practice of self-help in the form of investing labor was contested as it was seen as a threat to the newly established eight-hours day and fetishizing private property. (Blau 1999; Novy 1918) On the other hand important members of the settler's movement claimed its clear socialist ideology. For example Adolf Müller, leader of the cooperative and settlement *Am Rosenhügel*, said: "To work for the settlement is to work for Socialism. We, the Marxist- and labor union-educated proletarians are today the real protagonists of the settlers' movement." (Own translation of Müller, 1923, quoted in Novy, 1981: 28)

Altogether the focus of housing construction changed soon: the share of single-story settlers houses decreased fast and the vast majority of Red Vienna housing was built in the style of large housing blocks. In 1923 settlement houses amounted to 28% of the total communal building activities and in 1925 to only 4% (ibid.: 31).

### **The settlers' movement today: large non-profit corporations and privatization**

Many of the housing cooperatives founded in the interwar time still exist today and have turned into large-scale non-profit housing developers. For example the non-profit corporation *Gemeinnützige Siedlungsgenossenschaft Altmannsdorf und Hetzendorf* has developed out of the leftist settlement *Am Rosenhügel*: in the interwar time the settlement had around 520 housing units, today the non-profit corporation administers more than 6.000 housing units in Vienna (Thurner, 2015). Those non-profit housing developers receive public funding for construction and are in return bound to certain social criteria. As shown in chapter 3 since the 1960s non-profit housing corporations built the majority of new social housing construction (and not the city itself). Altogether in 2011 non-profit housing provides 138.700 housing units amounting to 16,5% of all units with primary residence in Vienna (Statistik Austria, 2015). Construction activities of the non-profit corporations after WWII have little similarities to their roots in the settlers' movement however as the majority of construction has been built as high-rise housing compounds.

Among all non-profit housing the still existing settlers' houses take a special position: In the spirit of guild socialism the institutionalization of the wild settlements into cooperative housing structures included the separation of usage rights from property rights. For example Neurath formulates in 1923 the anti private property idea of the cooperative settlers as follows: "Gardeners and settlers want to keep up solidarity amongst them and the whole entirety, they fight against all attempts to isolate the individual." (Neurath, 1923: 24, quoted in Novy, 1991: 55<sup>14</sup>). The aim of avoiding private property but still allowing for self-organization of settlers formed the basis of housing cooperatives of the early 1920s: Land that the first settlers had squatted after WWI and land the new settlers demanded in the early 1920s was bought by the city; this was financially possible through very low land prices as the strict rent regulations deprived land prices and thus served as a quasi-expropriation (Novy 1991: 54). The city gave the land then to the housing cooperatives in a special form of leasehold: the city gave out contracts for 80 to 99 years called *Baurechtvertrag* (Engl. right-to-build contract) in which the land stayed property of the city while everything built on it, the houses, became property of the cooperatives. Cooperatives have to pay an annual lease (Ger. *Baurechtszins*) per square meter to the city that is turned over to the settlers as members of the cooperative via a user-fee. The leaseholds between the city and the cooperatives have been limited in time to 80 to 99 years. Some of these contracts date back to the interwar time but many were also only granted after WWII. (Krause, 2015; Roscher, 2015)

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<sup>14</sup> Own translation from German: „Kleingärtner und Siedler wollen unter sich und mit der Gesamtheit Solidarität wahren, sie bekämpfen daher alle Bemühungen, den einzelnen zu isolieren.“ (Neurath, 1923: 24, quoted in Novy, 1991: 55 ).

When in 2012 the first leaseholds were expiring drastic developments threatened the settlers: according to one non-profit corporation (*Gemeinnützige Siedlungsgenossenschaft Altmannsdorf und Hetzendorf*) the city of Vienna offered to re-new the leaseholds but attapted to new land prices for 8,38€/m<sup>2</sup> monthly. As the old leaseholds didn't include index adjustment prices up until then were very low. Thus increases amounted to 20 times higher fees (Natmessnig, 2011) up to 194 times higher fees in some cases (Nussbaumer, 2012) and in others even to 20.000 times higher fees (Schuh, 2012). Increases that minimum wage or pension earners, like many of the settler, would find impossible to pay (Krause, 2015). Thus protest groups formed some and of them are still active today as contracts are expiring at different times in the various settlements. The housing cooperatives negotiated with the city of Vienna and finally reached an agreement that decreased the new prices to one-third of the initial amount of 8,38€/m<sup>2</sup>. While housing cooperatives see this decrease as a success, some settlers still condemn the increased payment. Firstly increased fees would ignore that all the work for building the houses and the settlements infrastructure was done by the settlers themselves or by their ancestors<sup>15</sup>. Secondly the new contracts run for 60 years but can't be passed on to inheritors and thus will eventually run out (earlier). (Krause, 2015). Furthermore not all of the settlers of the interwar time were institutionalized as members of cooperatives in the form of non-profit corporations; some simply joined together in settlers' associations and agreed on individual leaseholds with the city of Vienna. For those settlers a special situation evolves when the leaseholds expire: for example in the settlement *Wolfersberg* the settlers were given the opportunity to buy and a reduction of around 50% of market prices was offered to them – high prices for houses built by the settlers themselves none the less and for many households with minimum income or with standing credits for renovations already impossible to pay (Roscher, 2015).

### **The settlers' movement and housing commons?**

The settlers' movement is an interesting example to study as it exemplifies characteristics of Vienna's housing system in the interwar time and in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century:

1. For the interwar time the settlers' movement is indicative for two major aspects: First it shows how a housing crisis and potential housing commons movements are interrelated. As we can see the emergency situation for so many people in Vienna sparked numerous ideas on how to re-organize housing considering both or either a right to housing space and thus redistribution and a right to define a home and thus self-organization. Second the settler's movements history shows how the redistributive politics of Red Vienna were connected to top-down planning and the institutionalization of social movements. While many settlers' groups actively claimed support and organization by the municipality, others like anarchist groups were disappointed by the quick loss of alternative potential of the movement (Gautsch, 2015).

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<sup>15</sup> Or if the settlement house was not inherited, people had paid for the leasehold.

2. But also for today's housing situation the settlers' movement story is denunciatory: First we see how today large-scale non-profit corporations have developed out of the settlers' movement cooperatives and are under threat of commodification (receiving decreasing amounts of funding, introducing down-payment for tenants, introducing a right-to-buy in new built houses etc.). Second we see how the interwar settlers' houses have survived until today but are now either facing drastic increases of their monthly payments or are being privatized and thus a threat to the settlers right to housing space.

## 5. Conclusions

The analysis discussed two moments in Vienna's history in regards to their crises, politics and commons in the context of housing. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a massive housing crises affected the city in terms of housing shortage, bad housing qualities and insecure tenure. In an experiment with municipal socialism the Red Vienna government launched an impressive housing program building more than 64.000 public housing units in the interwar time. Strict rent control and an expropriation law at the national level helped the redistribution of housing space at the time. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century however Vienna's housing policies are starting to dismantle the legacy of Red Vienna. The city has stopped new construction of public housing and has shifted its focus on social housing provision by non-profit corporations with higher housing costs and privatization tendencies. The private market segment has furthermore experienced rent deregulation on the national level and attraction of private capital by a public-private partnership in urban renewal.

The closer look at one specific housing movement – the settlers' movement – revealed how the moment of crisis and emergency in post WWI Vienna had sparked a mass movement of people to self-build houses in the outskirts of the city and in doing so think and discuss (and partly also live) housing commons. It further showed how the strong local state of Red Vienna incorporated and soon hindered self-organization of the movement. Looking at the heritage of the movement today we see it under threat of drastically increased housing costs and privatization.

The article analyses the political framework of Vienna in the interwar time and Vienna at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century today in the perspective of housing commons as a dual right to housing space as well as to self-organize a home. In the interwar time Red Vienna politics had a strong redistributive effect and thus helped the right to housing space (at least in terms of financial aspects as other forms of discrimination were not questioned or even reinforced). On the other hand clearly top-down approaches in the housing program as well as the incorporation of the settlers' movement indicate a neglect of the right to self-organize a home. Today Vienna's housing system faces weakened redistributive measures in public housing as well as on a deregulated private market and thus a threat to the right to housing space. The right to self-organize a home however is also not encouraged as repressive policies show. The analysis leads to a pessimistic conclusion for Vienna's housing system under the perspective of housing commons: not only does it show the dismantling of the former right to housing space but also reveals that a right to self-organize a home wasn't met at any moment in time. In

an outlook on possible future housing commons Hodkinson (2012: 439) remarks: “Producing housing commons, therefore, takes place at the apex of resistance and creation. In the very moment of struggle to defend the existing housing commons, we must seek to transform it along the principles of living-in-common wherever possible but without weakening the protective shield that strategic housing commons provide.” The challenge for establishing housing commons might thus be to protect and enlarge the right for housing space while at the same time allow for a right to self-organize a home to evolve.

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