Barrack-Conversions – Closing opens up new spaces" (KaKo)

Abstract

Aim of the project **„Barrack-Conversions – Closing opens up new spaces" (KaKo)** is to collect and analyze experiences about the conversions of buildings and open spaces in former barracks for – in a broader sense - housing needs and to use these knowledge for conversions of barracks in Vienna in the future (additionally for other challenges in brownfield development).

Ti reach these **goals**, the chosen examples should face the challenge to cope with the old building structures and how these structures are fitting for the new forms of usages – (collective) housing, work in relation to housing, leisure, meeting places for community building etc. Moreover, the research is not only restricted to the area of the former barracks but as well on the surrounding neighbourhoods and its interrelations. This attempt is based on the assumption that the old structures opens up the minds and possibilities for new forms of housing or new forms of interrelations between working and living and that these new functions can have an impact on the entire neighbourhood. Therefore, there might be a possibility for a building of a new territorial capital as the former 'functional hole' (in sense of interrelationship with the neighbourhood) by the former military use can be converted to a new potential for the entire neighbourhood.

To reach these goals different **methods** were used:

- The first step consists of a material collection throughout Austria, Switzerland and Germany (particularly in the least mentioned[1]) at public administrations by internet-recherche and calls as much as on predominantly 'grey literature'[2].

- This information became analysed, a set of critiera was established and about 20 barracks were evaluated by using the criteria set.

- The third step was – together with the client – the decision for six examples in five cities (Münster, Fürth, Karlsruhe, Tübingen (2) und Freiburg); where more detailed analyses were to be executed.

- This detailed analyses consisted of in situ inspections (including photo documentations) and 22 expert interviews of the planning administrations, the real estate and housing sector, with architects and active tenants.

- The fifth step consists of the concluding analysis of the materials on two levels: firstly the description of the six cases and secondly a resuming overview of 'good practise', which thirdly was recapitulated for some conclusions and advices for the administration of the City of Vienna to handle the conversions of former barracks in the future.

All examples clearly exhibit, how important 'good governance' strategies are, as the existing regulations are leading at best to 'second best' solutions, i.e. creativity and pro-activity is needed, which means for the different stakeholders and actors

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[1] The reasons are the different degrees of changed military situation. Switzerland is almost not touched, in Austria the processes are much lesser and delayed. In Germany, however, the processes had been very intensive due to unification and a tremendous fiscal stress. The Allied vacated most of the places and the German Army had to reduce the number of soldiers sharply, leading to the evacuation of a couple of barracks over the last 15 years.

[2] Most publications are part of the 'grey literature', some of them had been diploma or dissertation theses in the field of geography and spatial planning.

- among politics a clear and explicit commitment for the aims of the projects and a broad coalition of the political parties within the local council;

- among the (planning) administrations a high degree of flexibility, engagement, and extra working hours (i.e. a high degree of intrinsic motivation) as much as a big interest to establish a new administration and planning culture ('governance');

- among the real estate and housing sectors the orientation on short ranged micro-economic benefits should be exchanged in favour of long term macro-economic aims to serve socio-integrative goals. This includes to establish or to develop an identification with and a binding to the respective places and to work together with other stakeholders and actors to develop the micro-site.

- Tenants and owners have to be very active in the designing of their flats, of the neighbourhood relations and the designing and using of the semi-public places.

To come up with innovative solutions like homeownerships for middle income classes, avoiding the suburbanisation of young families, the establishment of communities, to arouse initiatives of the civil society in the neighbourhood, establishing new types of housing and/or give room for combinations of working and living and to develop mixed-used and socially mixed complete urban areas the following aspects are all crucial (at best all together):

- A clear and consequent political strategy and decision making by high ranked stakeholders (strong political will).

- Persons within the administration and the pioneers as inhabitants which are willing and able to follow their aims (particularly and clearly against the scepticism of banks, administrations and local politicians).

- A pro-active municipality, which best acts as the only developer, sells to end users or leaseholders only and is re-investing the benefits into the neighbourhood development (as revolving fund for temporary actions, social infrastructures, attracting systems for the private sector etc.).

- The implementation of the strategic goals of the public administration, i.e. the functional mix, the town planning and urban design goals and the operation of institutions in specific sites cannot be properly reached via planning laws and orders, which only sets the respective framings. In these examples master plans are abandoned or only scribbles of possible futures. Interest is laid on process design (‚roadmaps') to reach the goals. Proper goals are met by differentiated contracts (i.e. the proportion of service space, the refuse of cars or the regulation of car parking).

- A clear rejection to developer models in favour of supporting owner communities and small co-operations (they are more cost-effective, though low median income households are becoming homeowners, are leading to more planning and design plurality, are supporting community building and therefore are more sustainable).

Last but not least: The projects are needing – particularly at the very beginning – more time and patience than expected and desired.