

Something **New** to grow **Old**

Integration of Housing for Seniors into subsidised
Housing in Vienna

Summary

a project by

 **raum** & kommunikation

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1 Summary

The number of elderly persons in Vienna is growing. At the same time the lifestyles and the needs of seniors vary a lot depending on age, financial circumstances and state of health and the elderly cannot be seen as one homogeneous group any more. Due to demographic change the number of family relations is decreasing. Though the period of seniority is expanding the period when care is being needed is shortening because in general elderly people are in a better state of health nowadays. These facts among others have an impact on the housing requirements.

95% of the seniors live in their own flat (respectively their children's). This is not only the most common but also the favourite way of living.

The bigger part of the seniors needs assistance only on a small scale. Due to a wide range of technical advices and in-home services personal care is often not needed to get along. Safety and comfort around the house and the neighbourhood are necessary for the elderly to feel at home, but especially social networks among neighbours are important to feel safe, secure and needed.

In opposition to this an extensive but rather paternalistic and expensive system of care facilities exists that only offers a small variety. Nursing homes as well as the Vienna Retirement Homes (Wiener Pensionisten-Wohnhäuser) are mostly very large institutions that provide a predetermined uniform type of accommodation. They are mostly separated from normal dwellings and concentrate on health care and supply.

Accordingly many seniors living in nursing homes or Vienna Retirement Homes get more assistance than they actually need. This is not only expensive but also encourages the loss of actual still existing abilities of the seniors. The self-determination is cut down more than necessary and especially younger seniors in search for a surrounding to grow old in do not find any housing offers according to their needs. By the time people move into the existing institutions they are of very old age.

To meet the needs of the changing senior generation housing is required that offers something new in between separated autonomous housing and assisted living in nursing homes. These housing offers should be integrated into normal housing. By activating self-help and neighbourly help the moment when institutional assistance is needed should be postponed.

In the past ten years only few attempts have been made to develop new housing offers for seniors that focus rather on housing than on care – not always with great success. These projects have been taken into account in this study, focusing on how they came into being and how they are being used and accepted by the senior inhabitants and thus drawing conclusions for future projects. How can housing policy support the development of a broad variety of housing offers for senior citizens?

The new projects that have been analysed can be divided into three categories: integrative nursing homes, cooperation of housing estates with providers of assistance for older people and housing projects based on neighbourly help and participation.

To expand the range of senior housing options two separated fields of expertise have to get in contact: housing matters, i.e. project development, building, rebuilding and operation of apartments and housing estates, and the field of social and medical care for the elderly, also including participation and empowerment of seniors.

Therefore it is important to evaluate and distribute the knowledge from experience, to create knots for an innovative network and to coordinate and push forward innovative ideas in senior housing.