

# MAPEAMENTO

## AN X-RAY OF VIENNA'S SOCIAL HOUSING

Are maps similar to X-Ray images of space? This article explores the use of critical mapping to observe the status of social housing in Vienna, encompassing affordability, ownership, housing quality, and proximity. These factors drive discussions on policy reforms, aiming to counteract housing commodification and social segregation. Yet, in Vienna, the discussion includes the development of entire neighborhoods to ensure a diverse socioeconomic integration. Despite Vienna's model status, it faces challenges from a growing national and regional neoliberal climate, budget cuts, a private development-driven economy and international real estate investment.

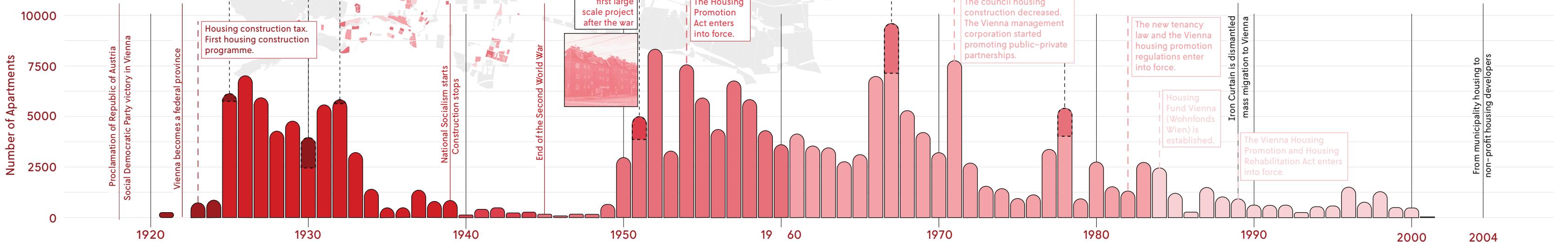
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By 1918, post-First World War, Vienna's population was around two million. Inherited from the Habsburg Empire, severe housing shortages and deplorable living conditions persisted. Social housing initiatives began in 1919 with the victory of the Social Democratic Party. The period of Red Vienna (Rote Wien) (1919–1934) envisioned the non-commodified modern city as an emancipating project. This period gained momentum with Vienna's provincial status in 1922, which gave Vienna control over its own taxes. Tax reforms in 1923, by Hugo Breitner, allowed Vienna to buy land and properties to fund council housing projects. In 1923, the City Council aimed to build 25,000 flats in five years, completed by 1926. Another program in 1927 added 30,000 more. The focus was on creating healthy living conditions, coined "fresh air, light, and sunshine."

The Second World War destroyed 87,000 homes and priority was given to rebuilding. Between 1945 and 1960 close to 4,200 new municipal flats per year were constructed. Municipal and non-municipal sectors (co-operatives and associations) collaborated in housing production, with the latter erecting approx. 25 percent of all new dwellings. The reconstruction of Vienna was completed already before 1960. Council housing construction slowed in the 1970s, shifting towards public-private partnerships. In 1973, the number of flats completed by these partnerships exceeded that of municipal flats. This trend was influenced by the European Union's regulation which limited public debt and investments making impossible to invest in social housing.

Significant legislative reforms were made in the 1980s and 1990s, such as the liberalization of rent regulations and the establishment of the Housing Fund Vienna (Wohnfonds Wien) for managing municipal land and urban renewal subsidies. This subsidies offered low-interest loans to landlords in exchange for limited rents post-renovation. It also fostered tenant collaboration in building renovations to alleviate cultural and social displacement.

Yet, the contemporary housing scene presents new challenges. The reliance on non-profit associations for social rental housing since 2004 underscores changing dynamics in housing provision, while the liberalization of rent regulations in the private market by the national government since 2010 has reshaped the balance between social and private housing sectors, particularly in the context of heightened migration and refugee influxes.

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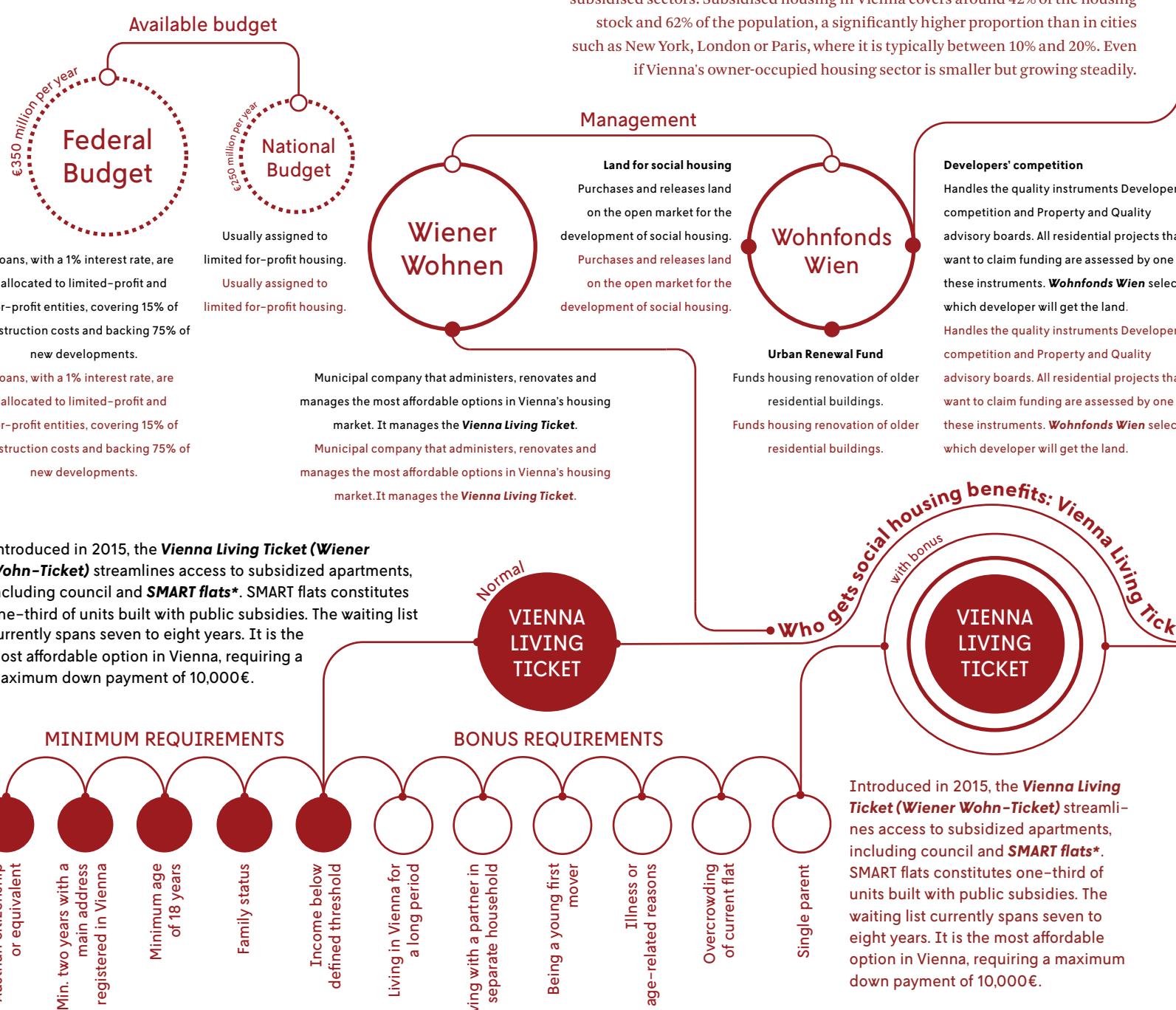
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\*This graph only visualizes the construction of council housing

## VIENNA'S SOCIAL HOUSING TODAY: INSTRUMENTS FOR THE HOUSING PROVISION

Today, Vienna struggles with the ambivalence of its policies, balancing between restricting and promoting change. While robust decommodification measures protect housing rights, liberalising policies aim to attract middle and upper income families. Two key pillars support these policies: housing market regulation and land use policy. The large budget allocated to social housing, the management and regulation of building protocols and citizens' access to social housing are key instruments for the provision of decommodified housing and for the functioning of the Vienna model.

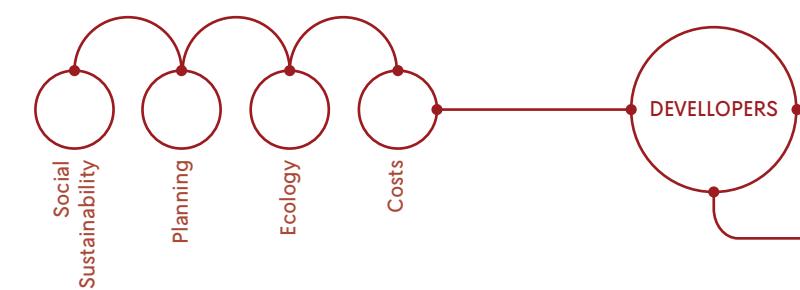
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## Who constructs social housing:

### Developers' competition

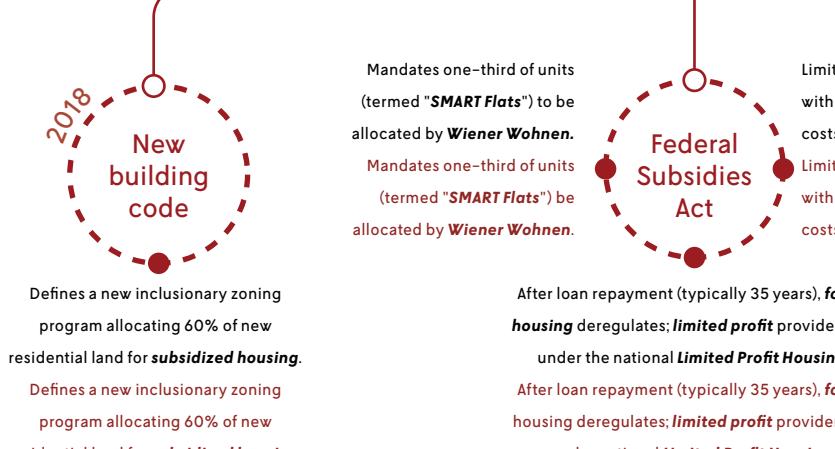
#### FOUR-PILLAR SYSTEM



Mandatory for projects with 500 or more **subsidized apartments**, Developers' competitions follow a four-pillar system aligned with municipal goals. All properties managed by **Wohnfonds Wien** undergo a competition, regardless of project size. Winners secure the right to purchase the construction site at a fixed price and receive housing subsidies covering up to 35% of total construction costs.

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### Regulations



### NON- PROFIT / LIMITED PROFIT.

Vienna's Limited Profit Housing Associations provide affordable housing with limited profits reinvested into development and maintenance. They allocate two-thirds of their housing stock based on internal criteria, with the remainder assigned via the **Vienna Living Ticket**. Units allocated by associations require a higher down payment of around 30,000€, compared to 10,000€ for the Vienna Living Ticket.

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### LIMITED FOR-PROFIT

Vienna's commercial or for-profit housing sector comprises privately owned properties operated for profit. Unlike **limited-profit** housing associations, which reinvest profits into housing, commercial housing prioritizes profit maximization.

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### COUNCIL HOUSING

Vienna's Council flats, owned by the city, offer affordable rents, open-ended rental agreements, and typically require personal funds. Presently, one in four Viennese resides in these 220,000 flats, many of which feature green inner courtyards and communal facilities. However, construction of new units has largely stopped since 2004.

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### SUBSIDIZED HOUSING

Subsidized flats are built by **limited-profit** and **for-profit** building associations. Currently, at least a third of subsidized flats are built as particularly affordable **SMART flats\***. In order to ensure a social mix, at least one third of each new build will be allocated via the **Vienna Housing Ticket**.

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### VIENNA HOUSING INITIATIVE

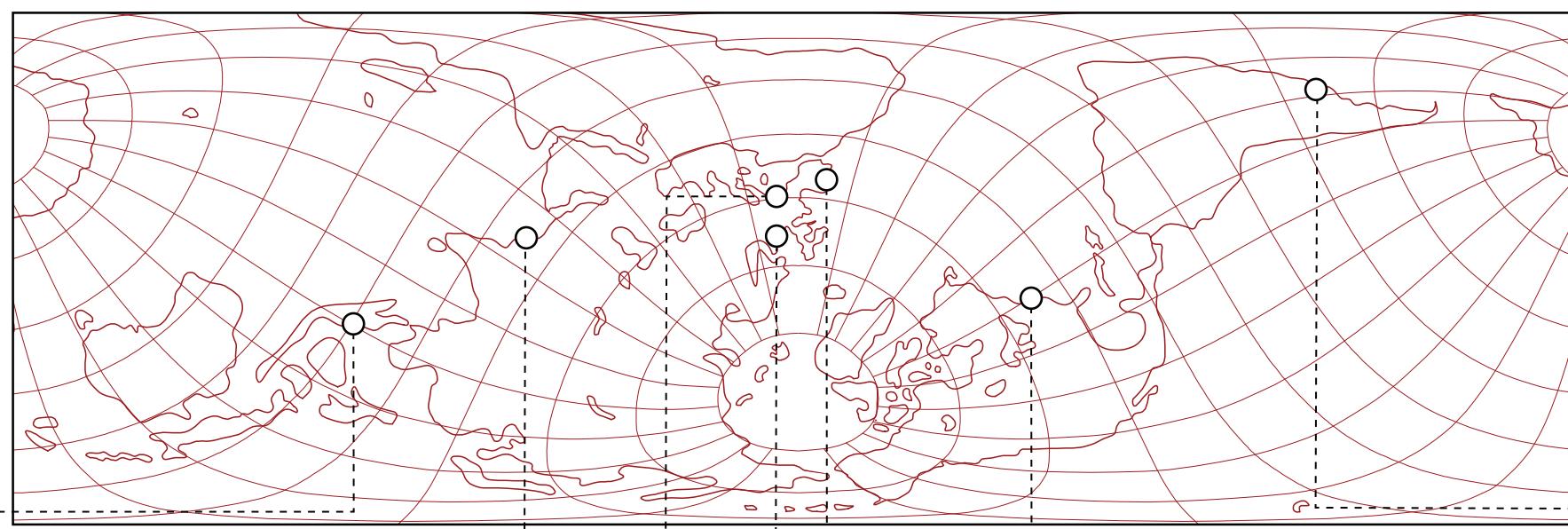
The Vienna Housing Initiative (Wiener Wohnbauinitiative – WBI) is a special variant of privately financed housing construction that offers similar conditions to **subsidized housing** construction through loans from the City of Vienna to **non-profit** associations. Half of the WBI apartments are allocated by the **Vienna Living Ticket**.

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\*This summary highlights selected elements from the authors' perspective and does not encompass the entirety of the system's functionality.

## COMPARING SOCIAL HOUSING IN VIENNA AND OTHER CITIES

In order to understand the success of social housing in Vienna, it becomes necessary to compare its parameters of social housing with other cities in the world. For this purpose the case of cities such as Singapore, Mumbai, Berlin, Porto, New York and Buenos Aires are presented. The condition of social housing in each city can be characterized by its broad goals, underlying ideology, mechanism of provision, degree and nature of state involvement, funding process, the status of the social housing project and the myriad challenges that it may face. By keeping these cities and social housing parameters in mind, a matrix can be developed in the following manner which can help to gain an overview of social housing in each city or compare a particular parameter with another city.

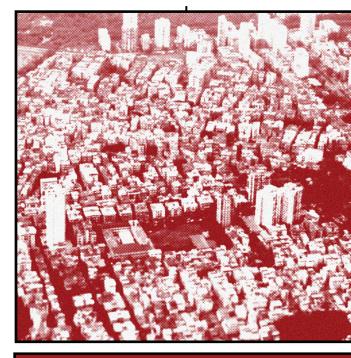


A WORLD MAP OF SOCIAL HOUSING IN CITIES

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SINGAPORE



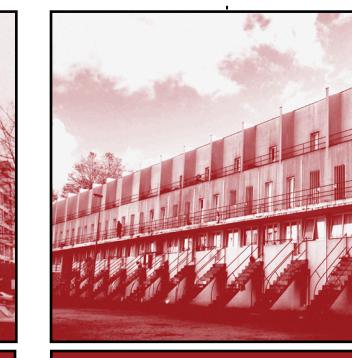
MUMBAI



VIENNA



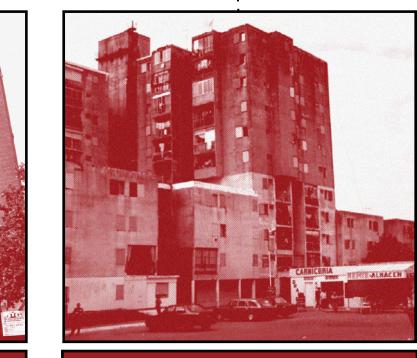
BERLIN



PORTO



NEW YORK



BUENOS AIRES

### GOAL GOAL

Squatter free city	Squatter free city	Housing for everyone living in urban areas	Housing for everyone living in urban areas	A city with diverse social mix and high quality liveability	A city with diverse social mix and high quality liveability
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Maximum number of citizens must have ownerships	Maximum number of citizens must have ownerships	Housing is rendered as a market commodity market	Housing is rendered as a market commodity market	De commodification of housing units, No privatization	De commodification of housing units, No privatization
-------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------

State control over majority land area	State control over majority land area	Slum rehabilitation by private developers	Slum rehabilitation by private developers	State controlled to attract private markets which achieve SH	State controlled to attract private markets which achieve SH
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High quality institutional administration in housing policy	High quality institutional administration in housing policy	State is withdrawn, It only authorizes private builder for rehabilitation	State is withdrawn, It only authorizes private builder for rehabilitation	Implicit state involvement in social housing policy	Implicit state involvement in social housing policy
-------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------

Funded through savings of the Central Provident Fund	Funded through savings of the Central Provident Fund	Subsidized by private builder after generating sale units on the slum land	Subsidized by private builder after generating sale units on the slum land	Social housing is subsidized through state level housing tax	Social housing is subsidized through state level housing tax
------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------

A certain degree of success due to racial integration and high rate ownerships	A certain degree of success due to racial integration and high rate ownerships	Largely unsuccessful, Low quality rehabilitation housing units	Largely unsuccessful, Low quality rehabilitation housing units	Running successfully due to state subsidies	Running successfully due to state subsidies
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------

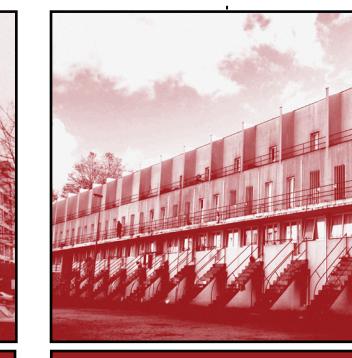
Long waiting lists, Ageing population, longer wait list, Privatization	Long waiting lists, Ageing population, longer wait list, Privatization	Skyrocketing real estate values in the city, private builder lobby	Skyrocketing real estate values in the city, private builder lobby	Budget cuts, Reduced land buying power of the federal state, Refugee influx	Budget cuts, Reduced land buying power of the federal state, Refugee influx
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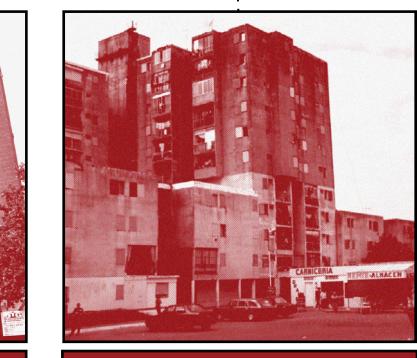
BERLIN



PORTO



NEW YORK



BUENOS AIRES

### IDEALOGY IDEALOGY

Attract people to move to the city	Attract people to move to the city	Right to proper housing	Right to proper housing
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Affordability of housing units, public interventions in housing policy	Affordability of housing units, public interventions in housing policy	Communities must have active role in shaping the stock and housing policy	Communities must have active role in shaping the stock and housing policy
------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------

Temporary market interventions to remove housing deficiency	Temporary market interventions to remove housing deficiency	State housing, state subsidized housing co-operatives, participation	State housing, state subsidized housing co-operatives, participation
-------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------

State is withheld from housing policy intervention	State is withheld from housing policy intervention	Direct state involvement in housing policy	Direct state involvement in housing policy
----------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------

Wide varieties of funding from private loans to public subsidy	Wide varieties of funding from private loans to public subsidy	A mix of municipal and private funding models	A mix of municipal and private funding models
----------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------

Currently unsuccessful due to decline in stock of social housing units	Currently unsuccessful due to decline in stock of social housing units	Access to aesthetic neighborhoods which have good social mix	Access to aesthetic neighborhoods which have good social mix
------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------

Affordable Housing	Affordable Housing
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Leverage private sector to achieve housing goals in the public sector	Leverage private sector to achieve housing goals in the public sector
-----------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------

Provide subsidy to certain populations, create new units	Provide subsidy to certain populations, create new units
----------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------

A mix of public and non-profit social housing programs	A mix of public and non-profit social housing programs
--------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------

Rising affordability crises due to foreign investment and tourism	Currently in crises due to foreign investment and tourism
-------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------

Lack of rent control and rampant evictions	Lack of rent control and rampant evictions
--------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------

Housing is a universal right	Housing is a universal right
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Neoliberalized housing policy	Neoliberalized housing policy
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Suburban land grabs, single occupancy state hotels, squatting	Suburban land grabs, single occupancy state hotels, squatting
---------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------

State controlled to attract private markets which achieve SH	State controlled to attract private markets which achieve SH
--------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------

State funded affordable housing programs	State funded affordable housing programs
------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------

Long administrative waiting times, long-term unemployment	Long administrative waiting times, long-term unemployment
-----------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------

## GREEN AND CONNECTED SOCIAL HOUSING

In contrast to many other cities, where moves toward environmental sustainability often accompany urban development driven by neoliberal strategies, potentially leading to gentrification, Vienna presents a different narrative. Here, a robust commitment to environmental initiatives, public transportation expansion, and social housing policies is not displacing long-standing residents. Since the 1980s, Vienna has actively enhanced its green spaces. For example, in central districts where there is a lack of green coverage, the city has established small parks and greenspaces in underused areas. These efforts, coupled with extensive infrastructure projects and a steadfast commitment to social housing, have significantly enhanced Vienna's urban environment and quality of life. Despite commendable accessibility to green spaces and public transportation, notable gaps persist on the urban landscape. While central districts boast excellent connectivity but lack greenery, outer districts enjoy ample green spaces but suffer from inadequate public transportation links. The development of new social housing in the outer districts presents a challenge in terms of infrastructure, as these areas may require additional transportation links and amenities to support the growing population.

**Vienna's green spaces and public transport coverage**

- Social housing
- 1 Districts
- Access to...
- Buses
- Subway
- Big green spaces
- Medium green spaces
- Small green spaces

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## VIENNA DISTRICTS RADARS

These 23 radar graphs compare Vienna's districts, highlighting various key factors and offering a holistic view of their urban characteristics. Despite Vienna's well-distributed social housing, contributing to a diverse social and cultural mix, disparities still exist among districts.

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