Self-Organised Housing and the Foundational Economy: A Case Study on habiTAT

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1. Introduction

Several organisations and declarations such as the United Nations Human rights council acknowledge adequate housing as a precondition for wellbeing and a basic human right (UN Human Rights Council, 2017). However, this right can hardly be fulfilled as many European countries face housing crises, characterized by overheated, financialised housing markets with people struggling to find affordable living space. While in Austria the share of housing costs from disposable income has been relatively stable with 18.2% in 2019 (Agenda Austria, 2021), in Germany this proportion amounted to 25.9%, for German households at risk of poverty it was 49 % in 2019 (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2020).

As the basic function of housing, namely the provision of a place to live, is replaced by its investment potential and the housing sector remains highly financialised and commodified as well as competitive (Novy, 2020, p. 8), the right of all to housing is under threat (UN Human Rights Council, 2017). The Foundational Economy (FE) sees the socially responsible supply of housing as an essential part of a well-functioning society (FE Collective, 2020). Since the FE supports collective and inclusive provisioning to ensure the fulfilment of basic needs within planetary boundaries, it serves as a theoretical backbone when aiming for accessible housing for all. According to it, modes of living are only sustainable if they can be universalized. Housing provision is mostly referred to by the demand of strengthening state-based social housing provisioning, such as in the case of the Red Vienna (Bärnthaler et al., 2021, p. 3; Bärnthaler et al., 2020a). However, in Vienna, social housing stagnated in the last decades as rent prices on the private market increased.

Self-organised housing (SEH) initiatives constitute a potential counterforce to these tendencies, as they aim to satisfy the need for housing by ensuring affordable rents. The *Mietshäuser Syndikat* in Germany and the equivalent organization *habiTAT* in Austria are network-based initiatives connecting different housing projects. Their legal structure is built in a way that houses are withdrawn from the market permanently and escape possibilities of market speculation (habiTAT 2022). It is to be assessed whether potentials and limitations of habiTAT and the Mietshäuser Syndikat constitute respective alternative provisioning systems. They seem to have the potential of expanding decommodification and the FE.

The aim of the present paper is, hence, to examine the potential of habiTAT to strengthen the FE and support a social ecological transformation. The following research question will guide the research process:

Main research question

In how far can self-organised housing projects like habiTAT strengthen the FE?

HabiTAT and the Mietshäuser Syndikat have been studied by several scholars with different perspectives and concepts. Hurlin (2019) e.g., assessed the collective ownership of the Mietshäuser Syndikat and its application of the concept housing for degrowth (p. 345). Hölzl (2018) illustrates habiTAT's contribution to the common good and to affordable living (p. 5).

Also, literature from the FE includes housing issues (Bärnthaler et al., 2021, p. 2-3). However, it remains vague about aspired housing infrastructure and the compatibility of SEH and the FE, which can be due to its purposeful context-sensitivity. To our knowledge, the FE does not mention SEH per se. Hence, in this paper, the potential and the role of habiTAT as well as SEH will be discussed more extensively with a FE approach.

To answer the research questions, a theoretical framework based on the FE, a case study on habiTAT and the application of the framework on habiTAT is being conducted. The second part of the paper introduces habiTAT and its structures. In part three, the theoretical framework as well as the conceptualization are being discussed. Part four presents the methodological approach and the research design. Part five consists of the main analysis and part six concludes the research project.

2. Introduction of self-organised housing and habiTAT

2.1. Housing in Vienna

The city of Vienna is known for its good quality of life and its history in assuring everyone's access to housing. This can be attributed to the policies implemented during the Red Vienna period (1919-1934). Then, Vienna has started the process of decommodification in technical infrastructures paving a way for collective consumption and showcasing the obligations of the municipality for the population (Novy et al., 2019, p. 231). During the Red Vienna social-democratic movements extended to the housing sector through rent regulations and consumption taxes on luxury goods and housing. This allowed to make redistributive changes in fiscal policy to provide high-quality public services (ibid., p. 232-234). The heritage of Red Vienna is still tangible, with the 'Gemeindebauten' providing for comparably affordable housing on a large scale (Kadi, 2015, p. 248).

Despite such past and the still high share of housing provided by the municipality (22%) and limited-profit housing associations (21%), affordable provisioning of housing is currently under threat in Vienna. This is reflected in increasing rents in recent years, e.g., private-sector rents rose by 28% between 2008 and 2014 (Paidakaki and Lang, 2021, p. 8). Moreover, since the 1980s there was a shift towards neoliberal policies following free market approach and promotion of private property (Kadi, 2015, p. 3). Even though there is a gradual revival of some Red Vienna's policies, e.g., construction regulations to cap land prices, the current situation on the housing market is challenging for many (Novy et al., 2019, p. 238).

In 2018 the distribution of housing (Figure 1) according to its different forms shows that in Vienna 19% is in private ownership, 22% are municipal housing, 21% is cooperatives, 33% are rented, and 4% are contributed to special types of housing, e.g., rent-free living with relatives etc. (Statistik Austria, 2019). In 2020 76,9% of housing in Vienna was rental and 20,4% was under private property (Statistik Austria, 2021). Vienna has the highest rental rate in Austria and the recent dynamic shows that it continues to increase. Considering such reliance

of many on rental housing and the trend with increases in rental prices, people may be seeking for new ways to satisfy their need for shelter.
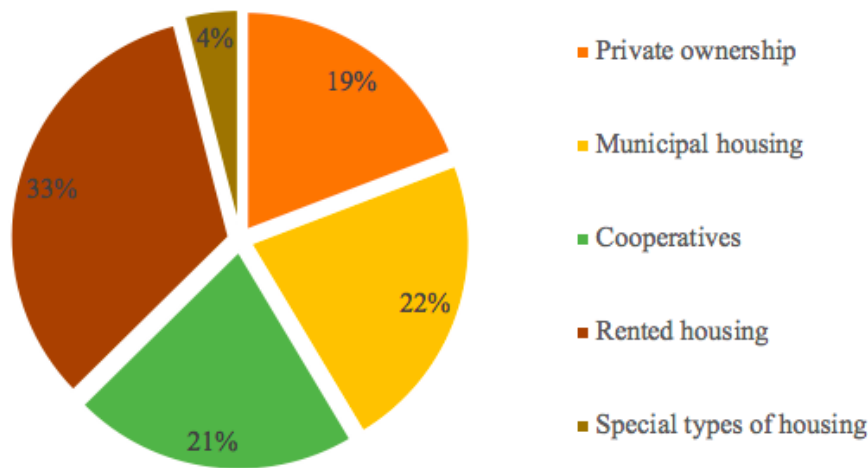

Figure 1: Distribution of housing in Vienna in 2018 (own depiction based on Statistik Austria (2019))

To understand alternative modes of housing provisioning, it is important to gain an idea about other models of housing provisioning. Following Jessops typology of different forms of governance this means to characterise them as heterarchical with a focus on cooperation, rather than market or state governance (Jessop, 1998, p. 43-52). Heterarchical housing provisioning can be further separated into cooperatives, that operate on a large-scale, are top-down organised and require members to acquire a cooperative share (e.g., Müller et al., 2021), and collaborative housing that describes models of small-scale and participatory organisation. This includes both co-housing projects and SEH. Co-housing refers to property groups that build- or buy property together and then collectively own it (Lang and Stoeger, 2018, p. 36). SEH similarly refers to groups that aim to cohabitate in collectively owned dwellings, however no private ownership is aimed at, which is ensured by legal constructions (Hölzl, 2018, p. 25-28).
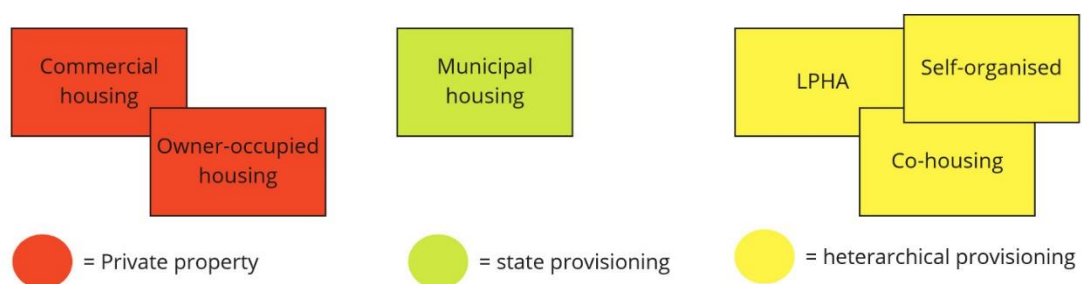

Figure 2: Typology of different forms of housing (own depiction)

In Vienna, collaborative housing provisioning is certainly not a new development but was already rooted in the settler movement of cooperatives in the 1920s, that back-then set the

foundations for public housing and Red Vienna (Lang and Stoeger, 2018, p. 44). Nowadays, large-scale cooperatives are dominant. Limited-profit housing associations (LPHA) are cooperatives and capital companies with principles of limited profit distribution and linking rent to costs (Müller et al., 2022, p. 11) In recent years, so-called *'Baugruppen'* are becoming more and more popular.

2.2. Self-organised housing and habiTAT

As mentioned above, heterarchical forms of housing provisioning, such as Baugruppen and co-housing, are becoming more popular (Novy et al., 2019, p. 239). These are organised in a way where people not only share space, but also their lives, e.g., interactions, helping each other out, spending time together, etc. These can be also self-organised initiatives, where people unite to find a place and make it into their home. Mietshäuser Syndikat in Germany and habiTAT in Austria are examples of SEH initiatives. Historically these appeared from squatter's movements where people take over a vacant building to cover their need of shelter and organise it into a living and cultural space (Hölzl, 2018, p. 25). The motivation behind squatting is different, yet it is usually connected to the question of resource scarcity and unavailability of affordable housing for all (ibid.). Mietshäuser Syndikat originally was founded from such a movement, where the goal was to resist commodification of housing and fight for the right of all to housing in line with a legal system. Currently, there are 171 housing projects and 15 project initiatives under the Mietshäuser Syndikat organisation (Mietshäuser Syndikat, 2022).

In 2015 habiTAT adopted Mietshäuser Syndikat's organisation to the Austrian legal system. Currently it 8 projects are united under the roof organisation, including Bikes&Rails, SchloR and Living for Future in Vienna, Willy*Fred and Jelka in Linz, Autonome Wohnfabrik in Salzburg, Brennessel Hauskollektiv in Innsbruck, 3er Hof in Leonding (habiTAT, 2022).

The structure is organised in a way to ensure autonomy of all housing projects, thus both Mietshäuser Syndikat and habiTAT are limited liability companies (Hölzl, 2018, p. 28). In habiTAT there are two stakeholders: (1) residents that are a part of the housing initiative (51% share), (2) habiTAT limited liability company (49% share) that is made up of all housing projects within it (ibid., p. 31). Such structure allows for the most fair and equitable relationships in the organisation. Residents of the house have a complete autonomy regarding the questions of everything that is connected to their living space, e.g., renovations, selection of tenants, organisation of space, as well as the right to veto the sale of the building (Hölzl, 2018, p. 28). The legal role of the habiTAT is limited to vetoing the decisions about selling buildings and changes in legal charters (ibid.). Moreover, property rights are distributed between residents, who are simultaneously tenants and owners (Hölzl, 2018, p. 31). Such distribution of power between the habiTAT and residents as well as among residents allows to support the fundamental ideas of the organisation and protect the residents while upholding their freedoms.

The system is designed to avoid hierarchy to the best ability and to ensure equitable ways of participation, especially when it comes to the financial part of the projects. They are funded by a mixture of private (e.g., lending money from relatives, using crowd funding platforms),

federal and bank loans that are covered by rents paid based on the pillar of solidarity contributions (Hölzl, 2018, p. 29).

Overall, such an integral organisation behind habiTAT on all structural levels allows for an autonomous self-government of people to satisfy not only their need for housing, but also for belonging to community and social inclusion.

3. Theoretical framework

In this section we aim to develop a theoretical backbone that allows us to evaluate the potential and limitations of SEH on the case of habiTAT. For this purpose, we introduce the FE. Before, it is important to add that habiTAT can be understood as social innovation. Social innovation refers to any kind of social novelty that changes social relations and processes (Avelino et al., 2019, 197). In that sense, habiTAT with its self-proclaimed aim of alternative housing provisioning aims to renew and alternate the provisioning of housing.

3.1. The Foundational Economy and Housing

The term FE is used both to describe a research program that entails foundational thinking, and a zone of the economy, meaning the collective provisioning for the satisfaction of basic needs such as water, food, education or housing (Novy, 2020, 15). Foundational thinking means, to understand the economy through zones, instead of thinking of all goods and their provisioning as homogenous. The FE book identified the core-economy (e.g., carework), the FE, the overlooked economy (e.g., haircuts or restaurants) and the tradable and competitive economy (FE Collective 2020, 3; Bärnthaler et al., 2021, p. 2f.).

Consequently, foundational thinking aims to strengthen the FE, using the imperative of "a good life for all within planetary boundaries" (Bärnthaler et al., 2021, p. 1). With this regard it prioritizes the satisfaction of use-values and thereby aims for decommodification, as foundational provisioning is deemed too important to leave it to the forces of the market. In this respect, foundational thinking is also strongly connected to human need theory (Bärnthaler et al., 2021, p. 8f.). Novy et al. use the metaphor of bread and roses to describe the scope of the FE and to distinguish it from a very classical understanding of state provisioning for the satisfaction of only existential needs. While bread can be understood as essential but boring, roses are metaphorical for the beautiful and special and thus important for a life in dignity, where social and cultural needs are satisfied (Bärnthaler et al., 2020b, p. 8, Gough, 2015, p. 1200).

With the demand of a good life for all within planetary boundaries, foundational thinking is also embedded into an ecological argument and is seen as a "cornerstone for a social-ecological transformation" (ibid.). The so-called FE 1.0. focused on meeting social needs without explicitly mentioning environmental concerns. Foundational thinking suggests a shift to FE 2.0., where ecological aspects are being incorporated. Following the Polanyian postulation "The only sustainable modes of living are those that can be universalized" (Polanyi, 1944

[2001], p. 265), foundational thinking aims at satisfaction of needs for all and not for only a few (Novy, 2020, p. 15). To achieve this, and based on a zonal understanding of the economy, Bärnthaler et al. demand for transformative policies towards the different identified zones of the economy. To strengthen the FE, it must be expanded, decommodified, ecologised and working conditions improved (Bärnthaler et al., 2020a, p. 12f.).

For our paper these categories are of great value as they allow us an understanding of what can be understood as strengthening of the FE in the field of housing. In the following we detail what can be understood with the categories expand, decommodify and ecologise. We exclude 'improving of working conditions' from our analysis as it is only a minor aspect of housing provisioning.

3.2. Decommodification condition

Based on Polanyi, capitalist development relies on the double movement of commodification and decommodification processes - that is, their interplay and interdependence. The former relies on the provisioning by unregulated markets, and the latter - on market regulation and non-market provisioning (Bärnthaler et al., 2020a, p. 3, 5). According to him, some commodities that carry a "particular social and political interest" cannot be made into an object of trade and their provisioning must be decommodified for the benefit of society (ibid.). Housing falls into the category of such a crucial and an essential need that has to be satisfied, thus its decommodification is defined as one of the major conditions that should be fulfilled for the FE to be strengthened.

To decommodify housing would mean to free it from being a competitive tradable good on the current liberalized market where it has become an object of investment and speculation, i.e., has been commodified and financialised (Novy, 2020, p. 8). Decommodification can also lead to overcoming social inequalities. This is implied in the overarching idea of the moral grounds of the FE (FE Collective, 2018, p. 95). Basic services should be supplied to all citizens, thus they must be decommodified. In housing, various alternative modes of provisioning should be made possible to allow for its decommodification. The most intuitive options include housing commons and municipalisation of housing, where both sharing and prosuming is included (Bärnthaler et al., 2021, p. 13).

Decommodification of such a critical good for everyone as housing can "support and sustain the FE" (FE Collective, 2018, as cited in Bärnthaler et al., 2020a, p. 17). If housing, as one of the crucial aspects of the FE, is successfully fostered in a city, the latter can be referred to as "grounded city" (Engelen et al., 2017). Decommodification can be seen as a 'tool' that allows to overcome competitiveness of the modern organisation of life and most importantly when it comes to satisfaction of the basic needs for all.

The various forms of housing introduced in part 2.1. are commodified or decommodified to a different degree. In Figure 3, we have outlined the degree of decommodification of different types of housing provision. It is important to emphasize that this is a sketch that does not aim

for comprehensiveness as e.g., the role of subsidised housing is left out. Also, the exact positioning is not determinable and always depends on the specific politico-economic form.

Obviously, commercial housing provisioning is on the left side of this figure. As argued above, market-based provisioning turns housing into a commodity (Marx, 2017 [1872], p. 14-19), where housing is only seen as utilizable exchange value and not as use-value of living. For owner-occupied housing this is different. As long as a person occupies a house and has no interest in selling it, the building is not a commodity traded on the market. However, due to increasing financialization property is seen as an asset and the owner-occupied house as a speculative object that can possibly be sold. Interestingly, the same mechanism applies to those co-housing projects that aim for private property (Hölzl, 2018, p. 23). The limited profit distribution and the cost-rent principle of the LPHA sector lead to decoupling prices from market mechanisms and dampening of the overall rent-level to a certain extent (Müller et al., 2022, p.11). However, LPHA depend on housing politics, and increasing investment in housing has led to a shift in ownership structures with links to banks and insurances (ibid., p. 22; Larson and Lund, 2015, p. 266-269).

The goal behind social or municipal housing lies in providing general, affordable housing applicable to all citizens. In that sense, social housing is decommodified as the only purpose lies in use-value provisioning. However, since the 1990s housing stock was sold by the city of Vienna, which shows the of commodification due to political developments also for municipal housing (Hölzl, 2018, p. 22, Heeg and Rosol, 2007, Interviewee 1, 20). In foundational thinking, re-municipalisation and state provisioning is a central path for decommodification (Bärnthaler et al., 2021, p. 14). In contrast, SEH and specifically habiTAT have the self-proclaimed aim of withdrawing housing from the market sphere via small scale projects. However, it is to be discussed in our analysis in how far this goal is met.
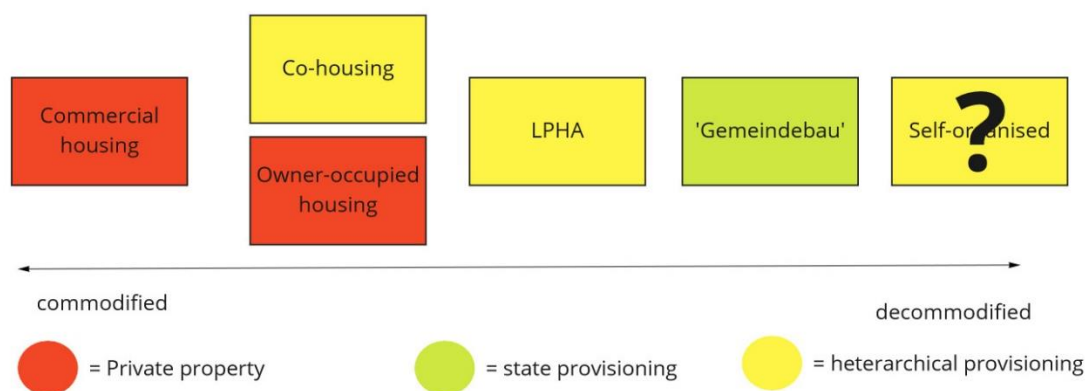

Figure 3: Degree of decommodification for different forms of housing provisioning

3.3. Expansion condition

The demand to expand the FE mostly refers to the idea that the FE should play a more central and dominant role towards the other economic zones. This implies making "a substantial

difference for many households" (FE Collective, 2020, p. 12). Here, Polanyi's claim towards the universalizability of modes of living (and thus also systems of provisioning) should be remembered. The FE aims to be universal in a sense that a plurality of modes of living is accounted for (Bärnthaler et al., 2020a). With regard to housing this implies that while in general housing is a universal need, there is a variety of wishes towards how these needs should be satisfied. Additionally, the metaphor of bread and roses can be kept in mind: Expanding the FE does not only imply functional, essential provisioning but also to account for social or cultural needs. It can be summarised that to strengthen the expansion of the FE, provisioning systems must be universalizable and generalisable.

In the context of SEH, it is important to connect this idea to theories on social innovations. Social innovations are room for experiments and essentially place-based and local. This is also highlighted by the FE Collective: Local experiments are seen as essential to develop a dialogue within communities in order to identify foundational needs (FE Collective, 2020, p. 12f., FE Collective, 2018, p. 154 - 157). However, it is important to avoid falling into the local trap of assuming to change global problems on the local scale (Kazepov et al., 2020, 95). In order to strengthen the FE, social innovations must be transformative, so they "have the potential for long-term changes in basic social forms of capitalism" (Novy et al., 2021, 7). In that sense, foundational thinking claims that social innovations must be universal in its approach to challenging societal infrastructures and not fall for fetishization of the small-scale and local (ibid., p. 6; FE Collective, 2020, p. 12f.). One possible way for that lies in "foundational experimentation" – small-scale projects prefiguratively disrupt infrastructural configurations on the local scale, as a way to envision the foundational. This implies that social innovations need to upscale to strengthen the FE. Interestingly, this question of scalability of SEH is already brought up by Hurlin in connection to the Mietshäuser Syndikat:

> "Can the syndicates provide housing for more than a marginal number of householders who are, consequently, singled out as constituting a subculture? Could the model have a positive impact on housing politics or might it only take over the government's task of providing decent and affordable housing? Is there a limit to scaling up the model and, if so, what kinds of structural changes are needed to keep the democratic structure of the syndicate?" (Hurlin, 2019, p. 357)

One central issue towards upscaling in the literature on collaborative housing are entry barriers and accessibility. While it is evident that commodified housing excludes those that cannot afford the rent, also de-commodified housing has entry barriers such as requirements for social housing or cultural and social capital necessary to be accepted within collaborative housing projects (Droste, 2015; Hede 2016, p. 60ff.).

3.4. Ecologise condition

The theoretical starting point of foundational thinking is the acknowledgement of systematic non-sustainability of capitalism, based on its subordination of use value to exchange value, hence, prioritizing profit and not the satisfaction of human needs. Ecological conditions of

capitalist production are contradictory as they function with the costless annexation of nature causing ecological catastrophes, although "functioning ecosystems are a precondition not only for a good life, but for capital accumulation as well" (Bärnthaler et al., 2021, p. 4). Making nature into a fictitious commodity and taking a human-friendly climate for granted, however, is an illusion (ibid., p. 6-7). As accumulation of capital so far only resulted in ecological overshooting and could hardly be decoupled from resource use, transformative ways of thinking have to deal with social-ecological contradictions (ibid., p. 1-2). The problematization of ecological contradictions led to foundational thinking 2.0. which develops strategies for a social-ecological transformation (ibid., p. 7).

From an ecological perspective, foundational thinking can serve as a strategic entry-point for a transformation by extending low-carbon foundational activities, decarbonising some and finding new sustainable foundational systems. Not only decarbonisation but also changes regarding other ecological spheres such as biodiversity and land use are part of ecologised provisioning systems. The share of ecologised provisioning has to be raised in order to strengthen the FE (ibid., p. 11). For a livable and just city, social-ecological infrastructures are key and have to be provided resource-friendly as well as collectively. Housing, health, care, green recreation and post-fossile mobility are necessarily parts of those social-ecological infrastructures. (Bärnthaler et al., 2021, p. 2-3; Bärnthaler et al., 2020b, p. 9)

In terms of housing, the question of ecologisation puts large demands on its system as the construction sector is responsible for much of the societal waste produced by the cement and steel industry (Interviewee 3, 1217). SEH constitutes a potential sector to tackle this issue as many projects seem to incorporate ecological thinking when building or refitting houses and when living together (ibid., 1346). Not only this material infrastructure but also the social infrastructure of SEH impacting tenants' social and consumption practices is assumed to have ecological impacts (ibid., 1452). In general, collaborative housing projects in Austria refer to projects characterized by a substantial degree of collaboration, social interaction and shared goals among the residents that concern, next to communal living, also fostering ecological sustainability (Lang, 2021, p. 13). Projects like Inigbw (Initiative gemeinsam bauen & wohnen), an advocacy group for collaborative living, aim to combine ecological and social sustainability in living and building practice (ibid., p. 17).

4. Method and research design

In the last section, we developed three different criteria that must be fulfilled for a social innovation to strengthen the FE. In our analysis we will use these criteria in order to test our research question:

RQ: "In how far can SEH housing projects like Habitat strengthen the FE?"

To answer this research question, we rely on the triangulation of different sources of qualitative data. Thereby, our study is organised in three stages: (1) literature review with a further step of building a typology, (2) exploratory interviews, (3) application of the chosen case study to the formed typology. The study follows an exploratory design with the elements of a case study,

existing literature presents a foundation for the formation of certain criteria with the following application to the existing case.

4.1. Exploratory interviews

We rely on the interviews to give us valuable insights into the habiTAT project as well as deeper understanding of the concept of the FE from the expert in the field. Overall, three interviews were conducted: (1) with a member of a Bikes&Rails project, (2) with a member of a SchloR project, (3) with a researcher in the field of the FE with a focus on SEH. The concluding field trip to habiTAT was carried about by three members of the group. Transcripts of the interviews can be found in the appendix.

The organisation of interviews, as shown in the table below, with a habiTAT (part of case study) representative was cyclical in the sense that there was an initial semistructured interview that allowed us to gain a better understanding behind the motivation and background of the project. In the final stage of the research, it was also followed up by the field observation and an unstructured interview with the same respondent in Bikes&Rails house, i.e., one of the Vienna based habiTAT projects. The second interview was conducted with another member from a different habiTAT project. Such interviews provided us with a crucial angle of the similar small-scale bottom-up social initiatives for the case study assessment and the analysis part of the paper.

The semi-structured interview with the expert on the FE was carried out after the substantial independent research on the topic and formation of the typology. The possibility to interview an expert allowed for the critical assessment of the created typology and helped to get the insights regarding some narrow questions specific to our research.

Interviewees	Date	Place
Member of Bikes&Rails	30.11.2021	Zoom
	24.01.2022	Bikes&Rails, Emilie-Flöge-Weg 4, 1100 Wien
Member of SchloR	13.01.2022	Zoom
Expert on the FE and in the field of housing	13.01.2022	Zoom

Considering the exploratory nature of the interviews, after transcribing they were used as an additional source of information to support our own conceptualisations, rather than a separate body of data, which did not require to apply any qualitative methods for the analysis.

4.2. Case study

Our case study has a unique nature, which consists of the two steps. We first conduct the case study of habiTAT followed by the direct application of the self-developed typology to test the case against its potential to challenge the current housing situation in Vienna and strengthen the FE. Online internet research is the source of information for the general information

gathering regarding the functional underpinning and main motivation behind the habiTAT initiative. Two interviews with the members of SEH initiatives under the aegis of the habiTAT and a field trip allowed us to study the case from the perspective that fits our research question and get an insider viewpoint in relevance to our study. Moreover, one more interview was conducted with the expert in the field of SEH, who is also well versed in the theoretical framework of the FE.

5. Analysis

With desk research, literature reviews as well as interviews, habiTAT could be scrutinized by the three criteria decommodify, expand and ecologise. The following part consists of the main analysis that is then synthesized in part 5.4 to answer our research question extensively.

5.1. Decommodify

It is the self-proclaimed aim of habiTAT to decommodify housing by withdrawing it from the market sphere. Both our interviewees from habiTAT stated this as pivotal motivation for the respective housing projects but also for the roof organisation. Using the legal construction introduced in part 2.2., dwellings are withdrawn from the market basically forever. As the roof organisation has a veto right to the selling of stock, the selling of buildings is prevented, unlike municipal housing that can be sold once the political majorities change (Interviewee 1, 270-273; Interviewee 2, 825). This way, habiTAT projects are taken out of the logic of profit realisation and land speculation (Interviewee 1, 467). As this reduces the overall stock of commodified housing, habiTAT can be understood as counter-movement to land speculation and is thus called "anti-capitalist praxis" (Interviewee 2, 1053) by one of our interview partners. This also means that in habiTAT, in contrast to the private rental market, rents will not increase but rather decrease in the long term (Interviewee 1, 268). With this, habiTAT aims to show that it is possible to provide housing outside of the logic of markets, and that this housing is also affordable.

Private property within habiTAT is abolished and the formation of new habiTAT projects can be seen as a process of socialisation of property and common creation (Interviewee 2, 900-902). In contrast to co-housing groups where private property relations remain and access is only given to those that can afford it, this enables a different form of collectivity that has the potential to change social relations among the inhabitants. E.g., the interviewee from SchloR told us, that they have a solidarity mechanism to re-shift rents among each other. At the commercial spaces that are part of SchloR, rent is determined by principles of solidarity economy. Projects that can't pay much rent are cross-funded. This enables the creation of space, that wouldn't be possible if rent would have to be paid according to the pure logics of capitalism (Interviewee 2, 939-954). In the long term, i.e., after approx. 30 years, there is redistribution from projects that have already been financed to new projects. In the Mietshäuser Syndikat, this is now the case with some projects, where a large part of the rent is used to finance new projects (Interviwee 2, 941).

However, habiTAT is still embedded into societal, i.e., capitalist relations. Rent is being paid by the residents, so that costs can be covered and the projects are financed (Interviewee 2, 939-943). Land prices are a major barrier that aggravates the establishment of new projects and makes affordable rents challenging, especially within bigger cities (Interviewee 1, 231-236; Interviewee 2, 913). E.g., the establishment of Bikes & Rails was only possible because cheap building land was allowed for by the city of Vienna (Interviewee 1, 226). This shows that there are financial borders to what and how much is possible – however one interviewee pointed out that it is the aim of habiTAT to test how these borders can be stretched and to see how much is possible (Interviewee 2, 956-960).

One border towards decommodification by habiTAT was also mentioned with regards to the role of state provisioning of housing. It was emphasised by one of the interviewees that it should primarily be the role of the state to provide for affordable and decommodified housing and that the upswing of self-organised, decommodified housing should not be an excuse for the state to retreat from this task (Interviewee 2, 898-900). This can be embedded into a Polanyian understanding of decommodification and commodification as entangled and dialectical double movement. Decommodified housing can be provided via redistribution by the state or via reciprocity by cooperatives and SEH (Interviewee 3, 1395-1404). Thus, if decommodification of housing through SEH is accompanied by withdrawal of decommodified housing by the state, decommodification is not achieved and the FE is not strengthened.

5.2. Expand

Within the model of habiTAT there is clear scope for further expansion. The number of projects continues to grow in Germany as well as in Austria, where the network was only established in 2015. Members of habiTAT are doing public work like accepting interview requests, creating websites for the projects and planning public events which shows efforts of expanding the network. habiTAT tries to make the idea more popular and give advice to groups that are interested in the model (Interviewee 2, 795). The projects learn from each other, especially new projects benefit from the generated knowledge of older projects, e.g., from the Mietshäuser Syndikat in Germany. And, due to the legal structure, the bigger the network grows the higher are the possibilities for financial solidarity.

However, various barriers of different reasons to expanding habiTAT remain. Financial and resource barriers exist in the access to ground resources which is highly limited due to high land prices (Interviewee 1, 211; Interviewee 2, 931). For small actors like habiTAT it is nearly impossible to get to land without cooperation (ibid., 211). Related to this issue is the problem of very slow processes of crowd-funding for the establishment of new projects (Interviewee 2, 943; Interviewee 1, 388).

Moreover, the projects are still happening in a niche, being very small scaled in spite of new projects establishing (Interviewee 3, 1129). Many financial and time resources as well as know-how are required to make a project happen and it takes several years to move in after the

planning started (ibid., 1129). Only people striving for collective modes of living and willing to put in lot of resources are part of the projects.

Other limitations towards expansion concern the homogeneity of habiTAT as well as other projects (Interviewee 1, 356). Ultimately, the tenants are mostly middle-class people and quite homogeneous in their education status as well as political orientation (ibid., 356) which leaves little space for various social milieus. The current crowd within habiTAT has a strong political and activist background, in that it is no coincidence for us that our two interview partners of habiTAT are involved in a variety of political activities.

Concerning this inclusivity issue and cooperation efforts by cities, it can be questioned why cities should subsidize properties for SEH projects when mainly middle-class people profit, whereas instead housing projects for vulnerable groups could be built (Interviewee 3, 1355). This dilemma refers very well to the tension between social innovations and aspirations of the FE as the middle-class background of social innovations often contradicts successful structural changes. However, the infrastructural provisioning for the lower class shall not be disregarded.

Our interviewees questioned whether habiTAT will ever play a big role in housing provisioning and whether scaling up of SEH in terms of high number of tenants is realistic (Interviewee 2, 829; Interviewee 3, 1270), and one has even questioned whether this would be desirable (Interviewee 2, 829). If a certain dimension of SEH is reached, the question is, whether the concept including participatory and democratic aspects can hold (Interviewee 2, 900). Hence, habiTAT could face a trade-off between expansion and its collective character.

5.3. Ecologise

From an ecological perspective SEH is universalizable as there is high potential for collective and ecological modes of living. Ecologisation or ecological standards are not rooted in the structure of habiTAT (Interviewee 2, 1036). However, the political aspiration of withdrawing properties from the market and thereby developing an anti-capitalistic practice, is highly connected with habiTAT's recognition of an incompatibility between capitalism and sustainability. Hence, by consciously applying alternative approaches, ecological sustainability is somehow embedded in habiTAT's vision and strived for by individuals (Interviewee 2, 1071).

The inclusion of ecological modes of living can be accounted to the collective and self-organised character of housing provisioning. In contrast to large-scale cooperations or municipal housing, there is space for people to bring in ideas and a perceived responsibility towards the environment. However, some ecological aspects within habiTAT projects, are not only due to the nature of SEH but are requirements for new buildings in developing urban areas enforced by the city, especially in Vienna.

Ecological aspects in habiTAT concern material infrastructures as well as social infrastructures. In material aspects, the focus lies on sustainable construction materials when building or refitting houses. The Bikes&Rails house e.g., is a passive house and built entirely

out of wood except for the cellar. Also, within many SEH projects other ecological elements are integrated by recycling old materials or making cesspits and greenings. The pooling of resources is an important factor too, as, often kitchen, large common rooms, cargo bikes etc. are shared (Interviewee 3, 1447; Interviewee 1, 618; Interviewee 2, 1037). The problem with ecologising material infrastructures, however, concerns financial constraints as the most ecological solution often requires high costs.

Ecologised social infrastructures include shared beliefs among tenants towards human-nature relations and towards sharing as a central element. This commonality strongly impacts social practices such as consumption or mobility patterns (Interviewee 1, 618; Interviewee 3, 1150). People at Bikes&Rails e.g., share cargo bikes, do not own cars and use public transport (ibid.). Living in a habiTAT project means enormous resource-savings with consumption going back drastically. People share tools as well as food automatically and waste as well as purchases reduce (Interviewee 1, 545). Hence, resource reduction through living together certainly characterizes all projects.

The ecologisation of habiTAT is also connected to decommodification as shared incentives are not directed towards generating money and exchange value but people care about the project and its purpose for people as well as society.

As ecological demands in the housing sector are not met, the discussion of how housing is organised increases. Here, one expert mentioned that SEH can be "an important piece of the puzzle" that has to be combined with many other instruments by the state and by citizens (Interviewee 3, 1220).

Finally, habiTAT is embedded into a highly unecological housing system. Building new houses is always problematic from an ecological point of view whereas re-fitting constitutes the more sustainable option. For re-fitting and sustainable solutions in habiTAT projects, people have to use a lot of resources and also need to take risks (Interviewee 1, 572). Yet, especially in Austria, the goal of building and owning a single-family house is very widespread. In comparison to SEH, the risks are not much lower and from an ecological point of view, this phenomenon is catastrophic. So, on the one hand, a lot of resources go in habiTAT projects, on the other hand, it appears less damaging when comparing it with the common way of how people create property for themselves (ibid., 572).

5.4. Synthesis: habiTAT as light-house project

In the last section we have analysed, in how far habiTAT as SEH network can strengthen the FE with regards to decommodification, expansion and ecologisation. Thereby we arrived at a multifaceted picture: First, habiTAT achieves decommodification within societal relations. Second, there are possibilities to expand but neither a realistic pathway nor the desire to become mainstream housing provider. Third, the collective and participatory elements open up the space for ecologisation within the distinct housing projects. In answering our overall research question, especially our results for a possible expansion of SEH are remarkable: SEH can certainly not become *the* major solution in strengthening the FE in the housing sector, due to

high entry barriers and a very homogenous target group but also due to organisational difficulties of a self-organised structure for large-scale upscaling.

One of our interview partners from habiTAT questioned himself whether it is desirable that SEH provides universalizable housing for all. For him, instead, a central aim is to generate learnings in housing provisioning, be it for other projects with less activist and engaged members, or for municipal housing provisioning (Interviewee 2, 868-872). This leads to an understanding of habiTAT as light-house project and place of foundational experimentation, where important insights of transformative praxis are lived and learned. Self-evidently, the central element that is learned and reinforced within SEH is the collective and self-organising character. One interviewee termed this as biggest strength and weakness: On one hand, it contributes to ecologisation, it enables decommodification, and it also simply increases the quality of living. Here, it is interesting to come back to the metaphor of bread and roses. Housing provisioning within habiTAT does not only seem to be simple bread but also entail the beauty of roses. On the other hand, it naturally limits the potential size of projects and excludes all those who strive for less collective modes of living (Interviewee 1, 487-583).

One aspect that repeatedly came up during our research and that is central for an answer to our research question, is the relation between SEH and the state. In the following we outline four aspects of this relation. First, SEH can and should not be understood as alternative to housing provisioning by the municipality. If the consequence of more SEH projects is a withdrawal of state provisioning, this contradicts the aim of the FE of universalizable, decommodified systems of provisioning. This is specifically the case as SEH primarily attracts people with middle class backgrounds due to high entry barriers with regards to social and cultural capital and thus does not solve the housing crisis for lower classes. Here, the danger of fetishization of social innovations, outlined in part 3.3., becomes apparent. To strengthen the FE, social innovations must be transformative by challenging capitalist infrastructures and not just be a niche for middle-class people. If SEH is seen as a foundational experiment, this tension can be transcended. Then, SEH can be understood as part of a counter-movement that demands political action and opposes the neoliberal turn in housing policy. By withdrawing housing from the market, a political statement is made: 'If you don't provide decommodified housing, we do it ourselves.' The subtext here is that the state should return to its role as a provider of affordable housing.

Second and related, our research identified several connection points between the state and SEH. HabiTAT already cooperates with the city of Vienna. E.g., the establishment of Bikes & Rails was enabled by a concept competition for collaborative housing that was won by the collective, where only half of the land price had to be paid (Interviewee 1, 226). Various potential policies by the city were identified that could further facilitate SEH provisioning. However, it must be kept in mind that it is questionable whether SEH should benefit from subsidies with the current social structure of the projects (Interviewee 3, 1231-1240). Because of this, especially mechanisms are interesting to us that could help habiTAT in overcoming barriers towards more universalizable housing provisioning. For one, the city could promote SEH by including it in their housing allocation programs, and thereby be an interesting multiplicator for increasing heterogeneity in SEH. This way other societal strata could be

reached (Interviewee 1, 2021, 355-375; Interviewee 3, 1260-1266). For the other, the city could establish financing pools for bridge financing: When a suitable site is found by a SEH group, the financing must be guaranteed within a few weeks, whereas the collective crowdfunding practiced at habiTAT takes several months. This gap could be bridged with credits by the city (Interviewee 1, 2021, 382-388, Interviewee 2, 915-930).

Third, SEH can generate learnings for the state provisioning by the city of Vienna. All our interviewees labelled the social housing provisioning of the 'Gemeindebauten' paternalistic and argued that collaborative, participatory and self-organisational elements were missing (Interviewee 1, 304-311; Interviewee 2, 828-836; Interviewee 3, 1330-1333). As argued above, collectivity is a pivotal learning from SEH and its re-integration into municipal housing could strengthen the engagement of inhabitants with their dwelling and neighbourhood. We speak of re-integration, as this would imply a return to the roots for the city of Vienna: In the housing provision of Red Vienna, there were a variety of collective cultural institutions - only over the decades has this inclusive, participatory model morphed into the top-down approach of today (Interviewee 3, 1343-1353).

Fourth, we want to draw attention to the possibilities of synergies by cooperation and new hybrid actor configurations, where self-organised projects become part of bigger development projects. In Freiburg, Germany, the municipality approached the Mietshäuser Syndikat to jointly provide housing on a large scale in an urban development area. Eventually this resulted in four larger scale syndicate houses. For the city this is a highly beneficial trajectory, as this promises affordable rents, basically for ever, the empty municipal coffers are not burdened and collaborative housing is promising to upgrade the neighbourhood (Interviewee 1, 255-267; Interviewe 2, 814-820, Hölzl 2018: 34). While this could be a promising pathway to overcome the barriers to upscaling by SEH, the danger of neoliberal outsourcing by the city is present again.

The multi-layered connection between self-organised and municipal housing provisioning can finally also be added with the relation between different forms of heterarchical housing provisioning. Different forms of heterarchical provisioning strive for different levels of collectivity and can still learn from each other. One of our interviewees e.g., brought up the example of the Wohnprojekte Genossenschaft (WoGen), where ideas from SEH and cooperatives are brought together (Interviewee 2, 977-1005). It would be an interesting further research endeavour to see how LPHA and SEH initiatives like habiTAT could cooperate and strengthen each other.

6. Conclusion

In this paper we examined a current role of habiTAT as well as its potential to fulfil the three pillars of the FE approach. We believe that our results can be applied to other cases that constitute SEH and depict their existing and future role in housing provisioning not only in Vienna, but in many other European cities.

Since housing was the main topic of our research, we relied on the FE 2.0 as the framework for the theoretical part of the paper. We believe this approach is particularly suitable for the topic of housing and allows to capture the important pillars, necessary for the universal satisfaction of a particular basic need for all. Based on FE we defined three conditions that were applied to the case of habiTAT: to decommodify, to expand, to ecologise.

Based on desk research and analysis of three conducted interviews we concluded that fulfilment of defined conditions is possible to a certain extent and may be contested. If fully decommodified, housing provisioning ceases to be the responsibility of the state, yet it may not be possible due to the capitalist overarching system. Being a niche phenomenon leaves many barriers for expansion, e.g., the bigger the project - the greater the financing, issue of inclusion, and internal questioning of whether up-scaling is wanted. Ecological aspect is mainly based on active decisions of members to account for it, rather than it being grounded in the system of SEH.

Overall, we conclude that the main transformative role of SEH project such as habiTAT lies in its ability to be a light-house project and foundational experiment. Due to various dilemmas that prevent the absolute fulfilment of the three conditions of the FE, the main power of SEH projects lies in the generation of learnings to either prompt others to create similar initiatives, also incentivised by the state, or inspire the municipality to apply their knowledge and practices to the municipal housing provision.

The contradictory provisioning of housing in the tension of the double movement of decommodification and commodification, with the simultaneous importance of the housing sector for the market and for people, through aiming at higher profits and satisfying a basic need, makes it a worthy filed for the further research. We assessed only one of many possible ways how housing can be made available for all through self-organised provisioning and discovered some major limitations in the realisation of such a goal. Other approaches to how the need for housing can be satisfied for all should be scrutinised and ideally, if successful, applied to practice.

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