

"New" housing shortage? - An investigation of "quality of housing" under the sociological aspects of an empirical pilot study.

The view of housing as a social problem takes place in this investigation taking into consideration the following aspects: housing conditions, living requirements and individualized ways of life. A short historical review shows that living and family have moved towards each other to a certain extent over a long period of time, until the social unit of living, the household, became naturally associated with family. Social changes, like e.g. the change of marriage and family as well as the emergence of new ways of living in the context of individualization requires an analysis of their effects on the modern way of living. In contrary to former times, the „ways of living“ has, with its development to present society, differentiated into a broad spectrum of living and household forms, from which relatively diffused requirements for living have resulted. In view of the fact that the needs of each individual, as well as the interests of different social groups are different and changeable, a general valid model of „living“ cannot be formulated. On one side is the necessity to offer very individual architectural forms and on the other side, the living space must be very flexible in relation to the changing ways of life. Even if it is very difficult to stipulate both aspects with each other, the demands of justly requirements for living must not be allowed to suffocate through concepts of standardisation. It is to ascertain that the parameters of standardized floor plans and individualized ways of life no longer suit one another.

In this investigation, the chapter "housing conditions" shows that today's floor plan design is still subject to the 1920s conceptions of "new building", while the „way of life“, having evolved from the industry to service and information society has long since left behind the traditional connections of class, family, sex role and architectural typology and have become far more diversified. The design of floor plans, as the basis for housing conditions, which orientate around a product instead of a function damages the essential basic rules for the configuration of dynamic systems. The possible types of housing must differ in their functional and spatial properties as well as in their characteristics with the exterior space in such a way that they are equitable to different household forms, household sizes and life-styles. The size of the household affects the floor plans in its functional and spatial arrangement. Extremely unfavorable housing conditions can complicate or impede the success of the respective life scheme. Small households organize themselves differently as large families, communal groups differently to one-person households. This also has consequences for the way of living. Floor plans should fulfill the specific needs of the respective life concept and not be universally matched to the traditional family model.

The evaluation of living values, which is the center of my investigation, contains the comparison of housing conditions and housing requirements, whereby it attempts to make the quality measurable. On first glance, the actuality of such a topic may not seem obvious, since, with regard to the situation in Germany, as it can boast a good supply of living accommodation. At this relatively high level, the pages concerning utility value, the quality of the housing supply by number of spatial areas per person and the quality of the interior fittings and the residential area is relevant.

The "new" housing shortage is justified above all at the lack of quality, inadequate in the way that the housing requirements of the inhabitants in the dwellings is not considered. This "new" housing shortage simply in terms of quantitative categories is no longer adequate to comprehend. In order to develop a system for evaluation of living values, both the present housing conditions as well as the current housing needs must be analysed and at the same time taking different life-styles into consideration. A short outline of different forms of "living alone" shows, how different the motives and situations in life can be, which formally categorize as "one-person households" and under no circumstance should their life style be generalized with the term "single". The 1970s gave birth to the typical one bedroom apartment, which was planned for young adults before they got married, and this is no longer suitable for the diverse forms of living alone today.

The difficulties, in determining housing requirement, lie in the fact that quantification must be tried in the market, which presupposes "defined" categories. The respective housing requirements for the underlying ways of life are not clearly definable and are not necessarily stable with regard to the individual. The method of surveying both accommodation offered and sought-after that is developed and presented in my work through use of the internet and orientated around living value contributes towards, can bring accommodation planning concepts nearer to the plurality of current living and household forms. It would be desirable, if the sociology of the ways of life and the "biographical plans" would capture a little more from the reality of life and so assess it topologically, so that concepts for construction consider the needs and that housing politics would intellectually benefit from it. The goals of an empirical investigation under sociological aspects, is to present the theme of "new" housing shortage, as well as to awaken the knowledge concerning contradictions concerning the social conditions of living.