

Current Relevance of an Initial Project

JOACHIM BRECH / HEIDRUN FEIGELFELD

Integration in the Interethnic Neighbourhood Housing Model

The question of how people from different cultures can live together as good neighbours is always present in the planning of new housing estates and in the letting and administration of housing. Besides their “everyday business” some companies repeatedly try to gain new insights with innovative projects, because the new challenges we continually face cannot be met with “it’s always been like this” and “that’s what we’ve always done”.

One such innovative integration project that has now been operating for many years is the “Interethnische Nachbarschaft” (“Interethnic Neighbourhood”) – also known as “Globaler Hof” (“Global Estate”) – run by Sozialbau in Vienna. The housing estate, that was ready for occupancy in 2000, was to have a proportion of Austrians to migrants of 50-50, with many ethnicities represented among the migrants. Sozialbau wanted to provide the structural framework as well as the social framework – highly qualified housing support. In a 2003 survey, three years after occupancy, 48% of the 140 households were in fact “nonnationalised migrants”, thus migrants (still) without Austrian citizenship.

This detailed 2003 evaluation allowed Sozialbau to establish whether the Globaler Hof had achieved successful integration of migrants and ultimately also of Austrians into an open, tolerant, urban community. The study investigated in great detail how and under what conditions integration was possible on this housing estate, and as it turned out it was quite successful. Since then the housing complex has again and again been used as a reference for successful integration, also beyond Vienna. The Municipality of Vienna awarded the project the first Wiener Wohnbaupreis (Vienna Housing Prize) in 2009.

This new study, which is, however, not so comprehensive, is intended to examine whether this housing model has also still proved itself after more than fifteen years, not least under the impact of the virulent new integration challenges since 2015 on account of massive migration.

Based on a survey of residents, the caretaker and the housing management company, this study can give an impression of the

*Integration
in an open,
tolerant urban
community*

Globaler Hof data

Location	Anton-Baumgartner-Straße 127-129, Vienna, 23rd District
Architect	Arch. DI Peter Scheifinger, Vienna
Building	140 subsidised apartments incl. caretaker's flat
	Size of flats: 44 to 108 sqm
	Housing costs: Gross cold rent per sqm: 7.53 EUR
	Mix: - 8 1-room - 61 2-room - 24 3-room - 46 4-room
	7 shops etc.: café, pizzeria, sport, hairdresser, chiropractist, gallery, kindergarten
	1 large communal room with kitchen, WC etc.: 312 sqm
	4 communal rooms on the roof: together 120 sqm
	4 communal closed loggias with around 180 sqm
	Children's play room: 51sqm
	Storerooms: 318 sqm
	Wellness: 209 sqm
	Laundry: 45 sqm
	Effective surface for funding: 10,860 sqm
	Communal area: 1,236 sqm
Basement car park with 146 spaces, 102 of them rented	
Status	First occupancy: June 2000
	132 flats rented (January 2016)
	New tenancies since first occupancy, as of January 2016: 91 (including passed-on tenancies)
TV system	- Number of stations: 117 - Number of foreign stations (incl. Germany): 95 - Every flat connected to the central receiver
Residents' organisation	Verein Miteinander e.V. (registered association)

Sozialbau can give no information about the number of residents, forms of household or ethnic origin.

situation. It should be emphasised that this is not a representative investigation. It is based on qualitative interviews with residents in various life situations but provides an impression and view of opinions which on the whole reflect reality. The interviews did not suggest that the (not interviewed) majority of residents would have answered very differently from the interviewees. The quoted statements go to make up a plausible picture and reflect sentiments at the Globaler Hof. Generalisations can therefore certainly be made.

*Statements
paint a plausible
picture*

The question was whether the earlier model has also proved its qualities over a longer period of time or could adapt and whether it can still provide a meaningful answer to changed situations and needs. It would be desirable in itself if the “model” had become a “normal case among many” and “inter-ethnic housing” a successful everyday fact of life.

Changes in conflict culture

Against the background of current developments, as outlined above, residents from six households from the Globaler Hof were interviewed following guidelines. (Anonymity was assured. In order to preserve it no information is provided about social status or origin except for migrant/Austrian.) Residents were selected:

- ▶ who had lived at the Globaler Hof for several years or since the beginning,
- ▶ who had only lived at the Globaler Hof for around one year,

including:

- ▶ family, first generation migrants, at Globaler Hof from the beginning,
- ▶ family, first generation migrants, four children, at Globaler Hof for three years,
- ▶ Austrian woman pensioner living alone, at Globaler Hof from the beginning,
- ▶ a small family, parents and small child, international mixed origin, at Globaler Hof for three years,
- ▶ resident, young, second generation migrant, living alone, at Globaler Hof since the beginning,
- ▶ Austrian family, elderly couple, with adult daughter in her own flat.

Others interviewed apart from residents:

- ▶ the caretaker, Ahmadschah Akrami, migrant from Afghanistan,
- ▶ the Sozialbau staff member responsible for the management of the estate.

The interviews with residents took place in their apartments. The caretaker and the Sozialbau staff member were interviewed on the telephone.

The topics

① Identification with the idea

In “regular housing” apartment-seekers look for an adequately-sized, affordable flat in a district that suits them. People look for and need a flat and not a housing concept. In contrast to the building associations, for example, for Globaler Hof residents - with a few exceptions - an idea or a concept such as community living, intercultural housing or living without a car etc. was not at first important, or in any case not a reason to decide for a flat in this housing complex. (Many also knew nothing about the concept.) As a rule such programmatic projects are directed towards a defined social milieu. The narrow concept serves to limit the milieu and isolate or exclude it. However, as shown in this case, identification with a central idea can also come about in normal housing if housing companies provide a suitable framework and the idea is not too narrowly formulated.

Identification with a central idea through a suitable framework

The first survey (2002, after a very short period of residency) found that most of the apartment seekers applied for a flat at the Globaler Hof because they needed accommodation (“First, of course, the flat - and the balcony”) and what was on offer - location, layout of the flats, quality (“presentable”) and price (“I’ve looked around, a lot higher, a lot the same”) - suited their requirements and possibilities. Sozialbau’s “50-50” idea, which was not at all highlighted in talks with possible tenants and sometimes not even mentioned, was nevertheless an inducement for some people to want to move there. But it was more or less incidental for most if they did not have a negative attitude to the idea. In fact, people could not imagine what it would mean for everyday life.

After the first years in the Globaler Hof the assessment of the concept showed a predominantly positive opinion of the idea. And everyone said that the 50-50 mix was an enrichment but it was also

good that there should be no dominant ethnic group among the migrants (from Turkey, for example).

Today little has changed. The interviewees were consistently positive about the idea of a “mix”. This was later accompanied by undifferentiated undertones: “Problems with people from a certain country.” People think that Sozialbau should pay attention to “a balance of nationalities” when selecting new tenants. All in all a successful mix. However, Sozialbau gives no information about the concept of the Globaler Hof to new tenants (which was lamented by some interviewees).

Thoroughly positive comments on the concept of a “mix”

Some quotes:

“We weren’t told about the aim. We first heard about it here. Sozialbau only said ‘different people’.”

“We only heard about the ‘Miteinander’ association after moving in.”

“I was astonished that Sozialbau hadn’t produced an information leaflet about the Globaler Hof. I heard about the 50-50 from a relative.”

“At first, when moving in, I didn’t know what the concept implied. Now I find it great. I have a lot of friends here. The mix is getting better and better. I’m very happy. But it can frequently be a struggle.”

“I find it important that we are all ‘socially similar’. At the beginning there was one family whose children got up to a lot of ‘mischief’. Now it’s quiet. The housing management mediated a lot.”

“The diversity is enriching for me.”

“When we moved in everybody was very friendly - when we were arranging the flat. We didn’t actually expect anything and were very impressed by the friendly welcome. Although our previous housing situation wasn’t bad either.”

“People help each other in thousands of little ways, such as tokens for the laundry.”

“We all know each other and get on with almost everyone.”

“You get parties thrown by people from Turkey, Afghanistan, India, Spain, Asia, Africa.”

There is however the fear that what is seen as the ideal mix is changing for the worse as new tenants move in:

“It would be good if they paid attention with new tenants that the mix is maintained. The change has a negative influence on the mix.”

“The new ones find it difficult in comparison to those who are integrated.”

In the six interviews there was also one critical statement about the Globaler Hof’s programme:

“A lot has changed for the worse. Because of the many moves there’s now a predominance of foreigners.”

“I wouldn’t actually describe the Globaler Hof as a place with overall ‘good neighbourliness’.”

“The communication doesn’t work. I didn’t imagine it like this.”

And working people who are hardly at home?

“The fact that different people live here? It doesn’t really matter, I’m hardly at home and don’t have many contacts here.”

“Good neighbourliness. I can’t complain.”

Identification is an abstract category. A question that sheds light on the topic of “identification” is: “When you have a visit from friends or relatives who have not yet seen the Globaler Hof, what do you show them first, what do you especially point out to them? Is there something that you’re particularly proud of?”

Some of the answers:

“Layout of the flats - super. Especially the 12 sqm loggia.”

“The roof garden. I walk round it with my visitors. (Unfortunately some of the gardens are not well looked after.)”

“The big community room.”

“Number 1: the flat; number 2: the garden on the roof; number 3: the laundry. Then the safe playground.”

One might think that the idea would wear out over the years

Stability and mobility: according to Sozialbau the Globaler Hof has a quota of new tenancies that is comparable with other housing estates. It could be supposed that to a certain extent the idea wears down over the years. It is not upheld by the Sozialbau administration or even by the caretaker. Even in group housing projects where the idea of the communal is the motive for setting them up, the enthusiasm cannot be maintained at its initial level over years because the life circumstances of the residents change over time. There are indications of this in the interviews: “word of mouth” is a phrase often heard. It can be supposed that many new tenancies come about in this way.

Conclusion

The identification of all interviewees with the idea of the Globaler Hof is strong – measured by the sometimes almost euphoric words “everything super”. It could have been expected that the microcosm of the Globaler Hof would also reflect the widespread judgments and prejudices, opinions and fears that are prevalent on all sides, particularly since 2015. However, on the housing estate the events “out there” seem to have no effect on its inner life. As in the first survey there is also a high degree of approval today and the success of the mix is emphasised. People see a definite benefit for their personal lives in the diversity and especially for the children growing up there. Getting to know others’ ways of life is seen as enriching. The achievement of this level of identification can be attributed to the following factors:

- ▶ Its voluntary nature: there appears to be no – tacit – pressure on individuals to participate in any kinds of activities.
- ▶ The 50-50 mix and the diversity among the group of migrants with the variety it brings prevent one group segregating themselves or being segregated.
- ▶ The residents are proud of many provisions within the housing complex.
- ▶ Despite its size the whole complex with about 140 flats is differentiated due to being divided into four building elements that are accessed by four separate entrances and staircases so that sub-neighbourhoods can form.

Identification with the concept also of course depends on the social status and the sensitivities of the residents. The mix does not go so far that the social status of the residents is very different, the opposite is rather the case. In comparison with “normal” housing estates in recent times, the turnover of flats is not out of the ordinary but is nevertheless a burden for the concept and also the ‘Miteinander’ association that supports it. It is difficult to get new arrivals to join. This harms social life.

② Everyday life at the Globaler Hof

How residents evaluate everyday life on a housing estate can be judged from two points of view: what forms of neighbourly assistance are there? And: are there conflicts between neighbours? The common causes of conflicts between residents on housing estates are well known: the noise of children and youngsters, loud parties at night – too little peace and quiet; a lack of cleanliness and order on stairways and corridors or in the laundry, vandalism, the unpleasant smells of cooking or barbecues etc. Another level of annoyance is the feeling of being

disadvantaged because, however well a housing estate is planned, there are always “better flats”, which of course the others have.

When migrants and Austrians live on a housing estate, very different behaviour patterns exist closely side by side. Not only do the migrants have different lifestyles but even the Austrians practice various styles of life in one and the same building.

The interviewees consistently judged relations with neighbours at the Globaler Hof as positive. People greet one another and the wide entrance corridor invites “village pump” conversations. “People can also put their flowers there.” The housing estate provides many opportunities for informal encounters. And: “Where somebody comes from is secondary.” “Those who’ve been here for a long time are on first name terms.”

However, one critical aspect emerges on the theme of neighbourhood: the change of tenants. There has already been a change in 91 of the 140 flats since first occupancy. (Whereby transfers are included. It is supposed that increased rents caused by higher operating costs are a frequent reason for moving out.) The question as to how much change a good neighbourhood can tolerate cannot of course be answered. But many of the interviewees would rather see less change.

Another topic raised by interviewees follows on: isn’t the housing complex already too big for neighbourliness? In the interviews the “Stiegen” (i.e. the building elements with their own entrances and staircases) were referred to again and again. This was already the case in the previous survey. At that time there was talk that individual communities form in the different parts of the building. These were also defined, for example, as “the people from Stiege 4.” As people said, the shops also contribute to good communication: “The Turkish supermarket is great. Cheap, their range of goods is okay. You can also have something delivered.” “We meet at the Turk’s.” Also the restaurants in the building: the pizzeria, “the Chinese”. Some opinions:

“The Globaler Hof is in any case a building with good neighbourliness.”

“A few older people. A neighbour needs a hand. Someone has a handicapped child. You pop by. We know each other.”

“I got to know the neighbours above me because of water damage. He comes from (x-country)... No problem despite the damage.”

And of course the question of whether neighbourly contacts are rather with families or people from the same country:

“We’re good neighbours, no matter where the neighbours come from.”

“Not an issue.”

Conflicts? The usual: noise from children and youngsters. “In summer there’s a lot of music in the building. You’re virtually deluged with culture. The building has the effect of an ear trumpet.” But: the caretaker arranges things to everyone’s satisfaction. If it gets too loud people speak to their direct neighbours themselves. Conflicts do not flare up about big things but about small ones. For example, tenants who live above the pizzeria complain about the kitchen smells. And how are conflicts resolved – or also not?

Conflicts are not sparked by big things

“There are a lot of small children – and that’s also good. If the children are a nuisance, we talk with them. Language? No problem.”

“There are people who keep out of the way of others. Sure. But it’s those who some keep out of the way of who are my friends.”

“There are the old enmities: for example between former Yugoslavs.”

“There was once trouble. People collected signatures and laid the sheet in front of the ‘opponent’s’ door with a small gift of biscuits. ‘Let’s bury the hatchet.’ And it was done.”

“There are also a few racist Austrians here. Older ones. They ‘slag us off’ when they’re among themselves.”

“Something unpleasant happens from time to time but it gets resolved. There are no extreme wars between neighbours.”

And of course cleanliness, a central issue in many housing complexes:

“Very satisfied” – the predominant opinion.

Security? Not a big issue. However, rumours, like everywhere:

“Everything can be seen well, it’s well lit. It’s okay.”

“It’s a hundred percent safe, we all know each other and talk to people we don’t know. Unfortunately too many changes of tenants.”

“If someone we don’t know comes in we ask them what they’re doing straightaway.”

“Apparently the daughter of a tenant was once molested in a lift by a stranger.”

Conclusion

In the Globaler Hof neighbourly help is taken for granted, probably in no different way than can also be the case on many “normal” housing estates. However, the decisive point is that the neighbourly help is to a certain extent international and ethnicity is thus not a barrier “if everything else is okay”. “You can’t be friends with everyone.” As in the first study it was also shown this time that there are evidently different milieus: “The people from staircase 2.” The fact that there are also tendencies towards withdrawal – for example from Austrians who have lived at the Globaler Hof from the beginning and from new arrivals who place less value upon neighbourliness in general or due to their way of life – is a very normal process that has little to do with a lack of agreement with the concept.

Tendencies to withdraw are also very normal

Conflicts which occur should be distinguished from one another. Whether something, such as a barbecue, can lead to a conflict depends on many factors: age, general opinion of foreigners, life circumstances or form of family, even on the passing mood of the person who feels disturbed. It is also decisive whether and how conflicts can be resolved. At the Globaler Hof the caretaker has the pivotal role.

③ The communal rooms

Communal rooms – laundries, children’s play rooms, rooms for residents’ parties etc. – have made a substantial contribution to the social quality of Viennese housing, even if some projects have more and others less funds available for them. With “good” planning the interior layout of the building can also be more than a functional space in order to reach the apartments as quickly as possible, it can in fact also be a space for communication. The open spaces can also be places for meeting as long as the interests of the residents of the adjacent flats are protected. The interviewees are especially proud of the communal rooms at the Globaler Hof, even if in some cases they only rarely use them or not at all. The fact that those who use the communal rooms must pay for using them themselves separately is seen as positive.

The free spaces can be communication areas

“The roof-garden does it.”

“The roof-gardens are great for making contact: there’s a barbecue once a week. There are bigger barbecue parties two or three times a year.”

“We enjoy making use of everything. Also the party room. For parties, birthdays. You put your name down with Akrami, collect the key and he checks the final cleaning.”

“Gymnastics, painting - the lot.”

“The laundry: a vehicle for contact. I once showed a newly-arrived Turkish woman how to use the washing machines and then she told me her whole life story.”

Negative: the fact that the planning of the communal facilities over-stretched the mark, such as with the Turkish bath, is a handicap that evidently lasted through the years. There were complaints about high additional costs. In the meantime it has been closed.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the communal facilities are the structural precondition for successful integration at the Globaler Hof, however not only their large number and variety but also their clever layout within the building. Savings could certainly have been made with the areas but this special feature seems indispensable. Besides this are the wide corridors between the building elements conceived as communication areas. The residents are proud of this and they and the residents association ‘Miteinander’ use the communal facilities intensively. The opening of the large communal room for external events should also be seen positively, not only due to the income but also because of the image of having such a large room. Despite this the communal facilities are also mentioned when operating costs are being discussed because they are considered to be too high.

④ Religion and integration

It would be a wonder if the current discussion of Islam and Islamism stirred up by the media did not change the atmosphere on housing estates. It can be supposed that the headscarf and the burka, symbols of the Islamic faith, will now be looked upon with different feelings than was the case some years ago. People had actually become used to such symbols. Other religions - Hindu, Sikh, Jewish - also have their special symbols but they are hardly seen. For Austrians the question of religion does not even arise as there is no outer sign. However, the headscarf is seen everywhere. Austrians probably hardly used to take any notice if a woman known to them as a good neighbour was wearing one, seeing it differently to a woman on the street. But that could have changed.

The question of religious affiliation does not arise for Austrians

The question: "It cannot be denied that there is now increased tension between the cultures and religions. How is it at the Globaler Hof?" did not surprise the interviewees. It would be unbelievable that the ambivalent attitude of Austrians - regardless of social status - towards Islam were not also reflected at the Globaler Hof. In the interviews the question of whether tensions have arisen at the Globaler Hof due to "religion" was therefore put quite openly. Statements:

*"Yes there are one or two women here who wear burkas...
Otherwise there are no strict Muslims here. But I don't want
to be seen as right-wing."*

*"Tensions? Not really. There's only a separation at barbecues.
The Muslims don't eat pork so we simply have a choice."*

*"It's good for the children that a lot of different people live here.
They get to know one another's idiosyncrasies."*

"We go to church, they go to the mosque. It's never been an issue."

One statement, "Yes, it is problematic with the Muslims," did not refer to life at the Globaler Hof, it was referring to the climate created by events in recent years.

Conclusion

At the Globaler Hof it appears that no resident, and particularly no female resident, sees a problem in the religious affiliation of neighbours in the building. This is also shown by the parties where signs of the Muslim faith are worn with no misgivings. The only woman in the building who wears a burka was mentioned as evidence of the tolerance practiced. However, undertones can certainly be heard.

Tolerance towards the religion of others is a central indicator of integration, which should be seen from both sides, for Austrians as well as migrants. And since the opinions found in the interviews can certainly be applied to the Globaler Hof as a whole, one can speak of successful integration. In doing so a distinction must be made between internal tolerance and possibly diverging opinions on immigration in general, and that too on both sides. At the Globaler Hof it is a matter of the relationship between individuals while outside it is about ideology, politics etc. Secondly, the preconditions must be taken into account. At the Globaler Hof there are neither excluded Austrian nor excluded foreign residents, they are rather all of a similar social status. This seems to be an important factor.

⑤ **Architecture in everyday life**

Residents naturally judge “architecture” from a completely different perspective to specialists, and differently among themselves, which is also the case with professionals. As users the residents, especially the women, evaluate “the architecture” pragmatically in relation to its suitability for everyday use and often with applicable arguments. The following aspects are particularly important:

- ▶ That the uses to which the rooms and various parts of the building are put should not disturb others.
- ▶ The privacy of the flats and their outdoor spaces should be protected from prying eyes.
- ▶ Practical and unproblematic use – no thresholds you can trip up on, sufficient ventilation.
- ▶ Details and choice of material – it should look good.
- ▶ Special features such as roof garden, swimming pool, play areas - amenities “one can be proud of”.
- ▶ Form/design: there is no desire for an extravagant architectural style nor should it be absolutely banal.

In the first survey at the Globaler Hof in 2003 several interviewees criticised the facade, said the inner courtyard was ideal for children, found fault with one or two pieces of playground equipment, praised the roof garden etc. and saw architecture mainly in its functionality.

In the current survey some of the interviewees really let rip when it gets down to detail and they say what has proved itself in everyday life and where they see that is not the case:

“Floor plans not up to much: long tube, no niches, no storage spaces.”

“Sound comes via the chimney.”

“You hear the people in the flat above us walking around. I need earplugs at night.”

“The outdoor stairways are slippery in winter.”

“Noise from the roof gardens in summer.”

“Generally bad soundproofing.”

“A bumpy ride for prams outside because of the gaps between the concrete paving.”

“We had mould in the bathroom. There should be better information about ventilation.”

Two of those questioned put forward a whole list of suggestions for improvements, both in the flats and outside. They may all be “small details” but are important for the atmosphere. All of them are concrete suggestions for structural and cost-neutral improvements that could be taken into consideration in future planning.

Conclusion

The Globaler Hof was awarded the first Vienna Housing Prize in 2012 particularly because here the functional layout of the individual areas - flats, communal rooms, open spaces - combines design - unpretentious but not banal - with its social intentions in such a simple but well-thought-out way. As a walk around the Interethnische Nachbarschaft shows, another contributing factor is that the attempt has been made to reduce the potential for conflicts with functional layouts and the selection of materials. At the time of its initiation the project contrasted with the dominant forms of construction influenced by architectural and political ambitions. In this sense it is still relevant today. As a rule residents hardly commented on general architectural topics, but as users they put forward long lists of individual improvements that could be made. Most of these suggestions are relatively cost-neutral. Even the housing management company says, “Well... a bit too much grey.”

⑥ The role of the caretaker

Nowadays apartment houses no longer have a “Hausmeister” (conciierge). The jobs that concierges used to do have been passed on to service companies. Today the caretaker is - as the word implies - someone who takes care, responsible for all large and small concerns. His qualification: social competence. Higher demands are now made of caretakers, not least due to the high proportion of migrants on the housing estates of limited-profit housing enterprises. A proportion of 50 percent migrants in a housing complex is no rarity. However, this proportion does not mean much. It depends from where and why the migrants come, whether a single ethnicity is dominant etc. .

Key role in keeping the Globaler Hof “functioning”

The caretaker of the Globaler Hof, Mr Akrami, who is himself a migrant from a Muslim country, has a key role in the “functioning” of the interethnic community. He has been the caretaker since the first occupancy and also lives there himself with his family. Many residents see him as “the soul” of the estate. Some of the interviewees are concerned about what will happen when he retires. What he has to say is therefore given a special place here.

Mr Akrami naturally does not want to take personal credit for the success of the Globaler Hof. Nevertheless it is not only the very

professional way in which he does his job that has made the Globaler Hof into a successful project but also his personal attitude to the residents with all their concerns - which seem small to a distant building management company.

On the one hand he emphasises that the residents of the Globaler Hof - in his view - have lived together over the years with tolerance and mutual understanding, or put simply, have been good neighbours. Example of the headscarf and burka: "That's no problem." However, it does happen that he must explain the historical context of these customs. Then there is also understanding. Akrami's basic attitude: "Talk to me." The fact that with his help the usual conflicts about noise, dirt etc. can be simply and quickly settled and that the communal facilities, although sometimes oversized, are still intensively used confirm what Akrami and the residents interviewed say. The atmosphere is good. The success of the Globaler Hof lies in the fact that things are so "normal" here. Most of the tenants have also lived here for a long time. "We've also matured."

Akrami sees his job in mediation: between residents if it gets a bit loud such as at the New Year's Eve party; when someone needs help with some household damage or if a social service is needed. "Then it's good that I live here." Life is made up of many small things that should be dealt with simply and quickly. All the interviewees find it very good that A. Akrami lives in the building. But Akrami also sees that the Globaler Hof is not an isolated island cut off from current events in the country and in Vienna. Akrami fears that the mood spread by the media could also have negative effects at the Globaler Hof. There is of course also reason to suppose that personal acquaintances and neighbourliness have become strong enough over the years to see prejudices coming from the outside for what they are.

See prejudices coming from the outside for what they are

There are concerns about the repeated rent increases as a result of rising additional costs, seen as primarily due to the communal rooms. These increases, as justified and understandable as they may be, conceal an "explosive force" within the community and the model, which categorically includes the communal facilities. It could be questioned from the outside - if it is too expensive for the tenants.

Akrami is also the most important contact person of the 'Miteinander' association. All the interviewees said they were very satisfied with the caretaker's work. "Without him it wouldn't be what it is. Akrami - a stroke of luck." "Hopefully he won't retire too soon." The caretaker is also a buffer for the Sozialbau building management. Whereas the caretaker received the highest praise, interviewees were very critical about the building management. Residents were badly informed and felt like supplicants. Requests have to go via the head office. Some statements:

“Sozialbau is always there for us. But Akrami is the key person.”

“If you’re not getting anywhere with Sozialbau and can’t find anyone responsible, it’s better to go straight to Akrami. He deals with everything.”

“Takes care of everything.”

Conclusion

The caretaker is the soul of the Globaler Hof. The residents and the building management company are unanimous on this. He is always there, mediating, putting things in order, giving advice, helping, occasionally reprimanding someone, and is also the contact person for the building management. Seen independently of the personal aspects of the caretaker, because he will also retire and a successor will have to be found, the following aspects should be taken into account:

- ▶ In view of the fact that there is such a large percentage of migrants on housing estates, it would be good if the caretaker also has a migration background.
- ▶ One requirement is a qualification in mediating conflicts that can arise when Austrians and migrants live together - intercultural social competence.
- ▶ Even if it can be difficult for the caretaker, it would be good if he lived on the estate.
- ▶ The caretaker needs the trust of both the residents and the management company. This also requires a high level of social competence.

Sozialbau – the Housing Management

The issue of migration is present every day in the allocation of flats and the management of housing estates, and for the staff there are certainly always new and increasing demands to be met. This is why experience gained from projects like the Globaler Hof is of great relevance. Not only should residents want to be happy with their housing estate but so should the housing management company. This example should have a positive effect on the company.

Since its first occupancy the Globaler Hof has been taken care of by the same manager. For Sozialbau the Globaler Hof was also an experiment. There was no way of foreseeing whether the 50-50 idea would prove itself in practice. It was here that “get-to-know-you”

meetings were organised for the first time, where residents meet up before moving in. This proved worthwhile and such meetings are now standard with the company. According to the Sozialbau housing management company the 50-50 mix of Austrians and migrants has now “almost automatically” become the rule on the housing estates. There is no instrument for controlling the mix of foreign households in order to achieve as wide a range of ethnicities as possible. Diversity should be the aim.

The 50:50 mix has almost automatically become the rule

The housing management company does not intervene in the everyday affairs of the housing estate but pays regular visits. There has also been positive experience with the communal rooms which is transferable: the varied provision – “No, there aren’t too many communal rooms,” – the functional layout is exemplary. The “Miteinander” association, which organises parties and other activities, makes an important contribution here.

Numbers of tenants moving out of the Globaler Hof are around the same as on other Sozialbau housing estates. Since first occupancy 49 of the 140 flats are still occupied by their first tenants and there has been a change in 91 flats. Some of these were vacated but passed on. The ground floor areas (restaurants, kindergarten) are all rented. There have not been longer periods with these premises standing empty, which would damage the image. There is criticism of the housing management company for a lack of information:

- ▶ There is criticism that Sozialbau does not inform new tenants of the aims of the Globaler Hof. “You only get to know about them afterwards, if at all.”
- ▶ There is talk of a feeling that the 50-50 is no longer the case and that there is now a predominance of migrants.

The housing management company also faces a challenge when it comes to measures that involve costs. The periodically rising operating costs are also a burden on the company but it has little influence on many items – meaning that it can only make savings with many smaller items such as lighting, where more economical bulbs have been fitted, or with garden maintenance etc. This has been discussed with representatives of the association. One tenant said, “Money could be saved. Why is there a cleaning crew when Akrami does everything anyway?” This shows that it would be good to have an information point at some eye-catching place in the building detailing who is responsible for which jobs and what each one costs. The housing management company is also involved in which TV channels should be received by the central system. At the moment there are 117 stations including 95 non-Austrian. The interviewees were satisfied with the channels

selected by Sozialbau. One statement: "There's no channel from our country but we can get it via the internet. No problem." One issue was also the request for video surveillance, but this is not in accordance with Sozialbau's philosophy.

Conclusion

The residents seem to be satisfied with the management company in everyday matters. "They take care." It is appreciated that the company makes regular visits. The 50-50 mix at Globaler Hof was still an experiment, today it is often already the rule on housing estates. In this regard the experience gained at the Globaler Hof has certainly been very helpful. Within the company the Globaler Hof seems to have a good reputation as a special project.

The interviewees point to one aspect that is by no means only relevant for the Globaler Hof: how far should - or could - Sozialbau steer the social mix on a housing estate? It is suggested that a predominance of migrants could have negative effects, as could the dominance of one ethnicity. Whether this supposition corresponds to reality is not the question here. On the topic of integration psychological factors are more decisive than facts.

⑧ Rent and running costs

Some of the interviewees, including the caretaker, were very keen to talk about the rent. The rent level was already an important issue in the first survey shortly after moving in but in a different context to this survey. At that time it was said that the fact that the rent was - comparatively - not low ensured that residents came from more or less similar social circumstances (milieu was not meant here). The rent level was seen as a selection instrument.

In this new 2016 survey the concern was expressed that residents would have to move out because of the rent - especially the operating costs. The topic was also broached that the upkeep of the communal rooms, a central part of the project, was too expensive. However, opinions differ. For example, one interviewee who had recently moved in said, "Great price in relation to what you get for it. The flats disappear fast, there's a queue. There's also a lot of renovation going on."

In fact running costs have increased steeply over a few years (also due to increased external charges). However, during the last accounting period they could be reduced. The question of whether the rent was currently reasonable was seen in different ways. One interviewee, just recently moved in, had for example done some research and found

Communal rooms too expensive to maintain?

the rent level completely acceptable in comparison. The statement, "Acceptable, yes but..." possibly sums up the general murmuring against rent levels - sometimes justified, sometimes perhaps not.

New arrivals who had studied prices on the Vienna housing market while looking for a flat see the rent level at the Globaler Hof as reasonable, whereas the long-time residents see the rent increases from the perspective of when they moved in. (The question of the reasonableness or affordability of rents in general and currently in Vienna in particular cannot be taken up within the framework of this study.)

Overall conclusion

It can evidently be said that the Globaler Hof is a case of successful integration which can also be successful in the future. There is of course also criticism on the part of the residents - where would that not be the case? But all in all none of the residents would say that they did not feel at ease in this social space and international neighbourhood or that they wanted to move out at the next opportunity. The fact that over the course of the years there are ups and downs in neighbourly life is also a part of the reality of life and should be seen positively. Because this is not a project burdened by an idea, rather the mix is generally becoming normality. In the process integration is not a category that refers to migrants alone.

*Ups and downs
as part of the
reality of life*

Chances exist for successful integration on housing estates like this, because integration is not something that can be ordered or organised institutionally but takes place through human contacts in everyday life. It is therefore a question of providing the preconditions and the organisational and structural framework.