



Innovative and Alternative Social Housing Projects in Hannover:

WOGÉ Nordstadt eG (housing cooperative), Selbsthilfe Linden eG (housing cooperative) and Baukasten e.V. (incorporated society)

Introduction

The following text introduces three alternative housing projects in Hannover. All projects share the approach to directly integrate the tenant's needs and interests. Still, each project has a different approach in terms of social, political, constructional and energy recovering aspects:

- The non-profit cooperative „Selbsthilfe Linden eG“ is a trend-setting housing cooperative, founded in 1983, whose model spread across Germany. Their strategy includes sustainable (substance) management, stable rental rates, involving users/tenants in shared living projects and thus achieving high identification on behalf of the tenants with the particular building project.
- „WOGÉ Nordstadt eG“ is a housing cooperative based on the model of „Selbsthilfe Linden eG“ the non-profit cooperative mentioned above. Founded in 1988, „WOGÉ“ took part in the refurbishment scheme for the city district *Nordstadt* (northern city district) in the late 80s and early 90s. With the refurbishment of a residential building in street “Schneiderberg” number 17, WOGÉ for the first time realised a social self-help project in compliance with the Passive House standard.
- „Baukasten e.V.“ is a non-profit housing project across different generations with the objective to realise self-determined living conditions in consideration of ecological aspects. “Baukasten e.V.“ is politically and culturally strongly engaged in the city district and has thereby obtained high public acceptance.

Reference to ROSH

Almost all buildings of the introduced cooperatives and incorporated society have been or still are refurbishment projects. While in the past the stress was on constructing affordable living space, today energy recovering building refurbishment is gaining ground. By involving tenants, users and cooperative members in the planning and construction process, common problems between investor and user have been solved and partly eliminated by means of differentiated financing methods.

For Hannover and the social housing scheme in general, projects presented here still spark off positive stimuli as these projects all stem from the 80s and have proven to last and function in terms of social, political, cultural, environmental and constructional peculiarities of individual as well as city district living space solutions.

1. Non-Profit Housing Cooperative *Selbsthilfe Linden eG*



Structure and Objectives of *Selbsthilfe Linden*

The non-profit housing cooperative *Selbsthilfe Linden eG* was founded in 1983 with the aim to provide good value for money flats including co-determination, shared living projects and good neighbouring relationships.

- long term low rental costs by means of self-help / tenant's involvement in the modernisation process
- co-determination of tenants in the planning of flats
- dismissal protection and constant right of residence
- associational democracy –equal voting rights for all

Origin

The housing cooperative *Selbsthilfe Linden eG* has experienced quick economic growth since their foundation in 1983. From a then small initiative, in 20 years time *Selbsthilfe Linden eG* has become a housing cooperative expanding over 344 flats and 11 commercial units in 47 residential buildings. On May 4th 1983, the foundation of *Selbsthilfe Linden eG* had been the first one in the region of Hannover and Bremen for the last 25 years. For inspectors of the federal housing association this was a new situation as well. The formation of this new housing cooperative was a result of a process that had started many years ago in the city district „Linden-Süd“. Starting position was a street called „Ahrbergstraße“ with four shabby buildings in it. Involved architects from a just founded initiative "Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Stadt- und Altbauerneuerung"(working group for city and old building refurbishment) did their best to prevent complete demolition. In the end, they succeeded in refurbishing the four buildings at moderate costs. Similar efforts had been necessary in the late 70s when the municipality had yet again preferred demolition to refurbishment but this time met public uproar as the designated buildings were the last ensemble of traditional working class houses in Linden. Again, committed architects succeeded in refurbishing these traditional buildings. They planned to designate future tenants prior to the actual refurbishment process in order to make them participate in the arising costs. The architects were looking for families with many children and an



income below the level to obtain social city housing. In total, 8 families with 17 adults and 31 children got long lease contracts for a single house and garden in the city district *Linden*. This project was a sensation and became widely known throughout Germany. The next step was to apply the innovative conditions of that project to multi storied buildings. Different possibilities had been discussed by a working group and the municipality finally offered two semi-derelict buildings in the streets "Großkopfstrasse" number 7 and "Albertstrasse" number 20. A legal form of organization had to be established for this new project. With different alternatives, a decision was made to form a cooperative with self-help from the tenant's side, strong neighbouring relationships and grassroots democratic set-up. 20 people assembled at the formation meeting in September 1982. They agreed in their critique of common modernisation practice and declared own political claims. Their aims were to socially bound rental rates over long periods of time and not to raise rental costs after 10 years as was common practice with private landlords. Future tenants had the opportunity to get involved in the planning of their flats. By means of self-help, meaning the tenant's assistance in refurbishment measures, construction costs could not only be reduced but social coherence among tenants was strengthened. In no time another 40 people wanted to join the cooperative and pay 1000 German Marks (approx. 500 €) as their cooperative share. But a total sum of 60.000 German Marks was not sufficient as starting capital for two refurbishment projects. Additional debt guarantees had to be taken to achieve the guaranteed amount of 200.000 German Marks. Only then work could begin. Seven brave families started taking action in the refurbishment projects. Under guidance of different architects they proved within a year's time that refurbishment assistance was possible and feasible also in multi family dwellings. Their benefit: low rental rates, fixed for the next 25 years to come. The next door building owner was so impressed that he offered the young cooperative his own house for sale. Numerous other buildings followed.

In the years to come, *Selbsthilfe Linden eG* developed a second pillar: re-privatisation. According to building law restrictions in Germany, the municipality of Hannover was forced to re-privatise buildings that were bought during refurbishment. A resolution from the municipality of Hannover said to only sell such refurbished buildings to the city owned housing association (GBH) or different non-profit enterprises and cooperatives. That is how another 26 refurbished buildings came into possession of *Selbsthilfe Linden eG*. The foremost small cooperative now provided work for two employees on a regular basis: Anne Barkhoff and Maria Rosemeyer decided to promote the concept of cooperative neighbourhood and self-help also in re-privatised buildings. Today, Ellen Roland and Anja Moritz follow this concept.

In 1993, *Selbsthilfe Linden eG* bought 8 houses with 67 flats that had not been refurbished yet. In this block of flats the cooperative has had a long tradition of tenant assemblies and fighting in favour of old rear buildings. But today, tenants demand modernisation. With no showers installed, toilets located in the staircase and heating by stove the flats had a standard hardly anyone wanted to live in. Modernisation without federal subsidies would have lead to unaffordable rise of rental costs. *Selbsthilfe Linden eG* was again asked to find individual and city district solutions in 1990, when homeless men squatted a building and demanded to change their accommodation for homeless people into decent flats with secure leasing contracts. Again, self-help was asked for and retrofitting measures were conducted accordingly.



Position of *Selbsthilfe Linden eG*

Since the formation, *Selbsthilfe Linden eG* is a political instrument of social refurbishment in the city district. Permanent low rental costs, self-help instead of high individual capital, far reaching co-determination rights, positive neighbouring relationships and equal rights for German and foreign families is what *Selbsthilfe Linden eG* stands for. This cooperative model from Hannover- Linden stimulated the long forgotten tradition of self-help cooperatives all over Germany.

Based on the model of „*Selbsthilfe Linden eG*“, new self-help cooperatives were founded in other refurbishment city districts like “Nordstadt” (housing cooperative *WOGÉ Nordstadt eG*) and “Vahrenheide-Sahlkamp” (housing cooperative *VaSa*).

In 2002 *Selbsthilfe Linden eG* was honoured with the federal Klaus-Novy award.

***Selbsthilfe Linden eG* in Numbers**

Current state:

Total living floor space of approximately 20 000 sqm in 344 flats.

Balance sheet total of 10 million Euro, approx. 350 cooperative members.

The average rent is 3,10 €/sqm and tenants pay 1,75 –2,25 €/sqm in flats without bath respectively heating and up to 3,25 €/sqm and 5 €/sqm in modernised or newly built flats.

Reference to the ROSH project

Housing cooperatives based on the model of *Selbsthilfe Linden eG* have very good preconditions necessary for implementing sustainable and energy efficient refurbishment schemes in existing social housing.

Selbsthilfe Linden eG is a model example that has been copied all over Germany. In Hannover itself, two such cooperatives were founded (*VASA* in Vahrenheide and *WOGÉ* in Nordstadt city district). Cooperative shares, user’s involvement in planning and implementation and codetermination rights guarantee social housing schemes that are socially and economically successful and sustainable.

2. *WOG*E Nordstadt e G

What is *WOG*E?

In April 1988 the housing cooperative *WOG*E Nordstadt eG was founded.

The city district “Nordstadt” was an officially designated refurbishment area by the local municipality and consisted of many old living quarters dating back to the rapid years of industrial expansion in the late 19th century. Main motivation for the formation of a new housing cooperative was to offer an alternative to traditional refurbishment institutions.

Positive effects of public promotion within refurbishment projects had better be forwarded directly to the tenants and rental price developments disconnected from the common housing market. Furthermore, users and tenants should get extensive codetermination rights in the taken refurbishment measures.



*WOG*E- example: modernisation of a multi-storeyed building in the Schneiderberg-street number 17 using Passive House components. In the different storeys Passive House standard is achieved.

Aims and objectives of *WOG*E

Next to social aims like

- supporting identification, responsibility, positive neighbouring relationships by means of participation and self-help.
- creation of living space for different types of households and ways of life
- provision for disadvantaged target groups in the housing market

ecological objectives are implemented as well by means of

- creating living space in a working city district with complete infrastructure in compliance with the principle „city of quick ways“
- closing gaps between buildings, loft and other forms of conversion. Land usage for living space supply is thus reduced.

Economical aims of the cooperative still are

- constant supply of affordable living space at good value for money,
- mobilising special financial means for house building such as self-help and promotional loans and
- using value enhancement for the cooperative

formation of WOGÉ

1988	formation meeting
	cooperative formation with the first 54 members
1990 – 1992	acquisition residential building “Edwin-Oppler-Weg 16/18”; first object for modernisation using self-help assistance
1990	acquisition residential building “Warstraße 10” purchase of building with intervention fund
1993	acquisition residential building “Im Moore 35” purchase of building with intervention fund
1993	acquisition residential building “Warstraße 13 A” purchase of building with intervention fund
1993	acquisition residential building “Vordere Schöneporth 9/11” purchase of building with intervention fund
1993 – 1997	new building „Kniestraße 12“ residential building using self-help assistance
1993 – 1997	new building „Warstraße 13“ residential building using self-help assistance
1994 – 1997	new building and conversion „Maschinenhaus Sprengel“ child day care and residential building, youth housing project using self-help assistance
1995	acquisition residential building „An der Strangriede 53“ reprivatisation of residential building from refurbishment trust estate
1995	acquisition residential building „Hintere Schöneporth 23“ reprivatisation of residential building
1995	reprivatisation of residential building “Heisenstr. 23–24” from refurbishment trust estate

1997 – 2002	acquisition residential building „Heisenstraße 32“ self-help modernisation with long lease contracts
1996 – 1997	new building „Strangriede 54“
1998	residential building as youth housing project using self-help assistance acquisition residential building „Rehbockstraße 26–28 A“
1999 – 2000	reprivatisation of residential building from refurbishment trust estate modernisation „Vordere Schönepfort 9“ self-help modernisation
2001 – 2002	modernisation „Warstraße 10“ self-help modernisation
2003	acquisition residential building “Am Puttenser Felde 3, 4, 5, 6, 6A” from Federal State of Lower Saxony repair works and partial refurbishment using self-help assistance of tenants. Tenants founded the organisation “Putti nonsop e.V.” and developed together with WOGA a concept for the building acquisition.
2004	reprivatisation of residential building “Kniestr. 13” from refurbishment trust estate of the City of Hanover. Due to the advantageous loan interests the building was purchased without any subsidies. Thus, this is the only cooperative building without occupancy obligations (flats can be unrestricted rented)
2005–2007	reprivatisation of residential building “Schneiderberg 17” from refurbishment trust estate of the City of Hanover. Purchase with regional credit and bank loan, retrofitted with subsidies for urban development, loan of the Reconstruction Loan Bank, subsidies of “proKlima” within the dena (German Energy Agency) model project “Low-Energy Standards for Existing Buildings”.
2006	reprivatisation of residential building “Edwin Oppler Weg 5” from refurbishment trust estate of the City of Hanover. The building is destined to commercial firms and companies engaged in the cultural sector. Since 2007 the office of the cooperative are located here.
2007	modernisation “Im Moore 35” including energy saving measures with self-help assistance of tenants (about 10 % of the total costs).



Structure of *WOGÉ*

Members of the cooperative can be assigned to different interest groups, thus pursuing different aims and influence development and work of the cooperative accordingly.

Sustaining Members

At the formation meeting in 1988 approximately 50 sustaining members could be recruited to collect sufficient capital for first projects. They supported the new cooperative not only financially with their share but in a non-financial way as well though they did not have personal living concerns or matters. Most of the first sustaining members are still part of the cooperative today. Even if not all of them participate actively in the cooperative, they still are important support.

Organisational Group

The organisational group consists of the honorary board, supervisory board and some sustaining members. With their work, they follow non-profit objectives and predominantly have no personal housing motivation. Property management is looked after by a full time employer. Once a week, the managing board gathers to prepare debate and coordinate activities and transactions of the cooperative. All decisions are corporate decisions.

With important topics, the supervisory board is informed and asked to give advice. It was possible to involve some of the tenants more in the cooperative's management only via the supervisory board. In the long run, strengthening self-management is an important aim of *WOGÉ*.

Tenants as Cooperative Members

The relationship of tenants being members of the cooperative as well and the cooperative itself is very different. Only some consider general meetings as a platform for codetermination. Most members reduce their input and interest to their actual living surroundings. Identification with the cooperative is most notable and visible there. Direct contact to the cooperative mainly works via the administrative employee on site.

***WOGÉ* in numbers (dated from 12/07)**

members:	343
building estate:	228 (+13 commercial units)
tenants:	470 (whereof 263 are cooperative members)
land area:	12,036 m ²
living space in total:	15,301 m ²
average consumption costs:	
sum of additional living expenses	1,71 € per m ² /month
heating	0,64 € per m ² /month
water	0,18 € per m ² /month
waste water	0,20 € per m ² /month
electricity	0,01 € per m ² /month
real estate tax	0,04 € per m ² /month
street cleaning	0,02 € per m ² /month
waste disposal	0,12 € per m ² /month
(calculated in Jan. '01)	



Reference to the ROSH project

WOGÉ cooperative was founded in the late 80s/ early 90s as part of refurbishment schemes in city districts. Today *WOGÉ* is a constant and established partner in the city district called „Nordstadt“ and has in the social housing sector become a reliable alternative in terms of organisation. Key of the concept is the cooperative principle and personal contribution and assistance on behalf of the tenants. In return, tenants get long term stable rental rates, high quality refurbishment and codetermination rights in possible modernisation measures. Users/tenants care for what is going on and have a strong self- interest in terms of energy recovering and constructional quality.

Modernisation „Schneiderberg 17“ in the city of Hannover

See ROSH “best practice”

3. *Baukasten e.V. Hannover*



Formation and History



„Baukasten e.V.“ is a non-profit housing project across different generations with the objective to realise self-determined living conditions in consideration of ecological aspects.

Back in 1985, the former dormitory for nurses in training at the „Nordstadt“ hospital in the street „Herrenhäuser Kirchweg“ was still an ugly block – outer surfaces were unattractive, long corridors, small rooms and tiny kitchens inside. Both houses were built in 1965 as investment vehicle of Hannover’s supplementary pension fund.

The construction was promoted with public money for the building to be used as staff accommodation for the next 20 years to come. After almost 20 years, in April 1985 the buildings were unoccupied. Nurses in training had moved out, probably also do to the unattractive living standard. A group of students developed a concept to reconstruct the buildings at moderate costs to avoid having an ugly hall-of-residence feeling to the premise but to supply living space for shared living communities. This happened to a time when the city district „Nordstadt“ was part of a refurbishment scheme and cheap living space was being destroyed. The reconstruction concept wanted to do without expensive changes in the static of the building and used recycled cost efficient construction material instead. Another stress was on using ecologically sound construction material. The project group had founded a club in January 1985 in order to buy the buildings, use them in self-administration and rent out the living space without any profit to students, pupils and

trainees. The planned acquisition was denied by the municipality but was rented out for 5 years in 1985 to the non-profit housing project „Baukasten e.V.“ After 5 years, the lease was not extended. But the municipality had miscalculated the tenant’s resistance who did not want to give up their living project as simple as that. Seven years of no contracts but negotiations with political decision makers followed, accompanied by different types of public relation activities. In the centre of the conflict were the municipal refurbishment scheme on the one side and solidarity with city district and living projects fighting to survive on the other side. In 1997, a 10-year contract was finally signed. While students formed the majority of tenants in the early days, today a multifaceted community has grown. 40 people aged 1 to 46 live together in 12 living communities of 2 to 6 people each. The building is characterised by the very different people. Adults, children and people working in different professions with differing incomes live together and are there for each other. That is the basis for 22 years of successful maintenance and self- management and guarantees continuation of the project „Baukasten“ (meaning: building set).

Aims and Objectives

One main objective of the incorporated society is to allow for collective living and to provide inexpensive living space for as many people as possible. Part of the concept are special common rooms like a café, wood and metal workshop, rehearsal room for bands and photo laboratory. These rooms can be used free of charge by different groups and initiatives and thus contribute actively to the city district’s cultural life.

Self-Management

„Baukasten e.V.“ is renting out rooms and flats. Tenants are society members likewise and have full codetermination rights concerning the development of the project. This fact is a crucial element of living in the project with respect to administration and development. For the self-management to rest on a broad basis, house meetings are held every two weeks where collective political and cultural activities are being discussed. Current obligations are waste disposal, annual rent paid out to the region of Hannover, real estate tax expenses as well as electricity and hot water supply. Though standard rental prices for each room are low, there has up to now always been sufficient surplus for the society to maintain and reinvest in the house as well as to support other projects.



Position

„Baukasten e.V.“ has been „ageing“. For more than two decades the house and society have created stable social bonds among the occupants. With manifold social, cultural and political activities the house has become deeply embedded in organizational district structures. Only some of the so called alternative living projects, which arose in the 80s as an expression of alternative ways of live, allowing room for solidarity and community living, outlasted the early times. Collectively used public rooms came under pressure of reprivatisation in times of liberalisation and deregulation. „Baukasten e.V.“ regards itself as an organisational form that promotes solidarity and plurality in alternative ways of life and living. And the story is to be continued.

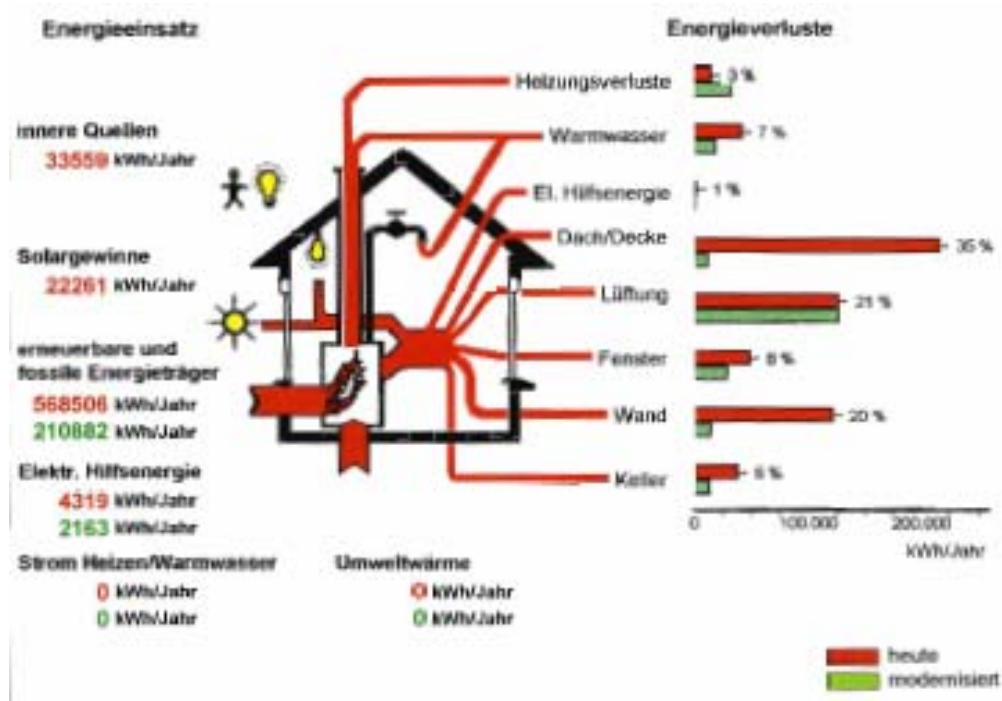
The incorporated society is convinced that it is today more important than ever to offer alternatives to social segregation and far reaching individualism. That is why the society wants to continue providing living space for people of all ages, colour, background, children and adults with the possibility to live together in solidarity. Numerous enquiries of interested people show the demand of self-managed and affordable living space in Hannover. To be able to do continue mere financial support is not enough.



Perspective

Alternative ways of life and concepts need space to be developed and realised. Such a space has been in the house in "Herrenhäuser Kirchweg 12" for more than 20 years. The "Baukasten" project has matured and in order to become old as well the society is planning to purchase the building. On 31.05.2007, the 10-year lease contract between „Baukasten e.V.“ and the region of Hannover has been denounced by the region. The society is negotiating with political personalities in charge and representatives of Hannover's clinical centre now. The existing offer to buy was turned down by the clinical centre. Meanwhile, „Baukasten e.V.“ has developed a socially and environmentally orientated refurbishment and financing concept for the buildings. Based on these concepts, „Baukasten e.V.“ is now asking personalities in politics and administration to agree to a long term utilisation contract for the buildings in the street "Herrenhäuser Kirchweg" number 12.

Energy scheme



Reference to the ROSH Project

„Baukasten e.V.“ is the smallest of the introduced housing projects here but has from a social point of view the most uncompromising approach. Conventional structures and role models like user (tenant) and administrator (landlord) are broken up in favour of a democratic grass roots organisation. Again, the user identifying with the project is the key to successful long-lasting communities and neighbourhoods. That is the most crucial precondition for sustainable and energy efficient building management. „Baukasten e.V.“ has developed extensive modernisation plans for its buildings whose realisation may be a model to others again, not only in terms of alternative living projects this time but also in terms of construction.