

# Trash or Treasure? The Critique of Post War Modernist Housing

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## ABSTRACT

In Germany, large parts of the housing stock have been built between 1950 and 1975. Initially popular for its modern flats and green environment, after the mid 1960s modernist housing estates became subject of intense criticism: they were perceived to be socially, environmentally and aesthetically unsustainable as well as un-urban and dangerous.

Recent research provides a more nuanced view: Like many other neighbourhoods, post-war housing estates have matured and settled into the urban fabric. Many of their longer term residents have become attached to them and they provide a genuine home for a very diverse group of urban dwellers. Furthermore, under contemporary conditions of increasing social polarisation and differentiated lifestyles, modernist housing estates offer alternative options for those who wish to live neither in densely built up inner city areas nor in suburban single-family homes, whilst being equipped with often generous amenities and public transport links. Due to their physical structure and large-scale ownership, they can more readily be developed into model neighbourhoods that are indeed socially and environment sustainable.

This paper will examine how the critique of large-scale post-war housing estates has hampered their development as well as the emerging opportunities they offer for sustainable urban living. It will also present how the new research lab on post war housing at the FRA-UAS is planning to tackle questions concerning the future development of this housing stock in the German context.

## Workshop

Workshop III: Urban Sustainable Development

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