

IC - (21015) - LIMITATIONS OF RESIDENT PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL HOUSING UPGRADING – THE EXAMPLE OF A GERMAN HOUSING ESTATE

Janine Poessneck¹; Sigrun Kabisch¹

1 - Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research GmbH (UFZ), Department of Urban and Environmental Sociology, Leipzig - Germany

Background and objectives

The call for resident participation in social housing (SH) upgrading faces a pitfall: While the rental housing stock in Germany requires upgrading in light of climate and demographic change, the residents' needs and concerns receive only limited attention.

The overall objective is to find out how to achieve appropriate resident participation in the SH upgrading process in order to make their voices heard. The residents in the German case study are mainly elderly people with low incomes or pensions. Many of them live alone in small rental apartments. The Covid-19 pandemic amplifies social isolation.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

The research design focuses on the residents' values and needs in the refurbishment process. Despite the Covid-19 contact restrictions, we could conduct interviews with residents, but also with representatives of the housing company, the construction firms and craftsmen. This was part of the intended living lab. However, it became clear that residents' involvement in building refurbishment is limited. Therefore, the next steps will be to put greater emphasis on redesigning the residential environment outside the buildings together with the residents.

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

We have identified obstacles and dilemmas related to the upgrading process. From the residents' perspective, this includes different burdens during the construction work (lack of privacy, exposure to dirt and noise) and concerns by low-income households about rent increases after upgrading. Apart from information exchange with the housing company in advance of the refurbishment, we could not find evidence for active participation in the process.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

Sociological research on housing upgrading in SH estates requires a tailored methodical design to discover both realistic opportunities and limitations of resident participation.

The contribution is embedded in the symposium that presents an international and interdisciplinary research project. By introducing the German approach, which is sociologically oriented, limitations of resident participation become obvious.

Palavras-chave : social housing upgrading, participation, demographic change, climate change, isolation

