Understanding Change: Tracing Transformative Interactions in a Large Commonhold-Type Housing Estate

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**Conceptual and methodological framings**

*Approaching the research problem*

• **We constantly change** our environment through interaction, communication and differentiation; and we **adapt** to these changes. [Berger & Luckmann (1966) The Social Construction of Reality]. The changing of our (urban) environment may be conceived as a changing of ourselves. [Harvey, David (2008) The Right to the City]

• To control change means to maintain or, conversely, to challenge the stability of a given system or a given condition. The problem of change relates to **questions of power**. [Lefebvre, Henri (1970) The Urban Revolution]

> Social and political dimensions of change in the built environment
Conceptual and methodological framings

Approaching the research problem

Housing estates as privileged sites of enquiry:

- Housing estates relate to the intrinsic web of social interactions and spatial practices of the everyday;

- ... as well as to the more abstract levels of planning thought, institutions and urban organisation.
Conceptual and methodological framings

Approaching the research problem

- Too narrowly-framed architectural forms of analysis in housing estates have produced bias, such as the myth of Pruitt-Igoe [Bristol, Katharine (1991) The Pruitt–Igoe Myth]
Conceptual and methodological framings

Approaching the research problem

> Extending the repertoire of architectural and urban analysis, through:

- **Multi-scalar perspective**: making use of the estate’s privileged position at the intersection of the everyday and the urban scale

- **Timeline perspective**: analysing decisions in their relatedness to each other; tracing sequential and rhythmical aspects of interactions; making visible alternatives; following controversies  
  

- **Arena/ social worlds perspective**: emphasising contingency and difference, as well as the presence of relevant actors “in the situation”  
  
  [Clarke, Adele (2005) Situational Analysis]

> Understanding the research problem as “situational process”
The Housing Estate
Parkstadt Bogenhausen in Munich
The Housing Estate  Parkstadt Bogenhausen in Munich

Changing ownership status

- **Realisation Phase**
  - GEWOG
    - Completion: 1956

- **Housing Association**
  - GEWOG
    - Single Ownership
    - 1960
    - 1967

- **Privatised Dispersed Ownership**
  - Neue Heimat Bayern GmbH
    - 1967
  - WEG Parkstadt Bogenhausen, 1960 Units
  - Doblinger
    - Unternehmensgruppe GmbH

Timeline:
- 1950
- 1960
- 1970
- 1980
- 1990
- 2000
- 2010
The Housing Estate: Commonhold-type Entity

blue: commonhold entity (excluding roads)
Commonhold-type form of ownership according to WEG

Key characteristics

- **Commonhold-type property right**: self-contained spatial unit + share in collective property rights
- **Collective as legal body**: makes decisions in formal meetings; engages in contracts etc.
- WEG in Germany since 1951; commonhold in the UK since 2002
Three hours during which members (owners)

- hear the **annual reports** of the administration and the advisory board
- **grant discharge** for budget implementation
- **be informed** about new issues, events, current maintenance plan
- **discuss and decide** on budgetary and other items submitted by **admin/advisory b.**
- Discuss and decide on items submitted by **individual members**
Tracing Transformative Interactions: Mappings
as produced in the case-study

- **Main body of material:** annual meeting minutes as formalised communications of the commonhold-type collective

- **Interrelated mappings:**
  
  - Mapping of **participants** (the situation of interaction)

  - Mapping the **situational process** (full timeline)

  - Mapping of **narrative sequences** (detail)
**Main Body of Material: Formalised Communications**

**Coding Cycle 1:** assembling and categorising of 284 collectively made decisions (extracted from annual meeting minutes 1984 – 2016)

### Timeline: pattern of single decisions

### Table: Assembling and Coding Data

**DATA EXTRACTED FROM MINUTES OF ANNUAL MEETINGS 1984 – 2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDEX</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>ACTORS/INITIATORS</th>
<th>CHANGE STATUS</th>
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<th>SPATIAL UNIT</th>
<th>VOLUME / SIZE</th>
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**Participants in the Commonhold ‘Arena’** (the situation of interaction) based on Social Worlds / Arenas model [Adele Clarke (2005) Situational Analysis]
Mapping the Situational Process (multi-scalar/full timeline)
Mapping of Narrative Sequences


Sequence "MAINTENANCE PROJECT" 1985 - 2016

External Actors ▶
Investor (silent) ▶
"maintenance as required by orderly administration services" (Admin)
introduction of maintenance plans

Administration + Advisory Board (Admin + AB)
Collective (raising topics in meetings)
Individual Owners (resident / non-resident)

Decisions collectively taken in annual meetings prop. approved/deferred (grey) / not approved (black)
"maintenance and building modernisation as primary task" (AB)
"repairs and building modernisation dominate agenda due to age of estate" (AB)
splitting of en-block decisions for maintenance items
Acknowledging of renewal processes in private units (AB)
Minimum level of sound insulation? (flooring)
justifying and re-affirming of maintenance measures (AB/Admin)
1
2
3
4
5
m m m m m
Tracing Transformative Interactions: Preliminary Findings

• The **maintenance project** seems to **dominate** the collective decision making process.

• Most **substantial changes** fall in the period of **single ownership**, prior to 1984.

• If substantial changes occur today, they are located in the **private domain** (micro level) rather than in the collective domain (meso level).

• Patterns of collective action seem to correspond to what Donald Schön conceptualises as **“dynamic conservatism”** in systems: changes and agents of change are admitted to a system as long as the “stable state” is not adversely affected. [Schön, Donald (1971) Beyond the Stable State]
A Role for Mapping in Participation?

Sequence "DECISION MAKING" 1985 - 2016

External Actors
- Actors: making propositions / raising topics
- Decisions collectively taken in annual meetings prop. approved/deferred (grey) / not approved (black)

Investor (silent)
- Two admin. consultancies per year
- Precedence: Decisions on single building level? deferred (intercom)

Administration + Advisory Board
[Admin + AB]
- Collective as 'quasi-municipality'. Advisory board emphasises need to accept compromise to reach agreements (AB)
- "increased demand for information" (Admin)
- "The 50th anniversary event has brought the community closer again" (Admin)

Collective
(raising topics in meetings)

Individual Owners
(resident / non-resident)
- Centralisation/Efficiency: authorisation of administration to decide on small cases
- Advisory board meetings to be public? Opening of advisory board agenda?
- Decisions on building level? (electrical)
- 50% non-owning = non-voting residents
- "being able to subordinate individual interests to community interests." (AB)

Advisory board invites individuals to come forward as candidates and serve the collective as members of the board
- Estate walk newly established by Admin
- Forum 1215
  - Resident meetings (initiated by Admin)
  - Criticising of minority actions against majority vote: felling of trees (AB)
- Monthly admin. consultancy
- Invitation to workshop (vents on lawn) (AB/Admin)

Timeline:
- 1980
- 1990
- 2000
- 2010
- 2020

Events:
- 1980
- 1990
- 2000
- 2010
- 2020

Notes:
- 50th anniversary event
- Estate walk
- Forum 1215
- Resident meetings
- Advisory board
- Centralisation/Efficiency
- Decisions on building level
- Non-owning = non-voting residents
- Monthly admin. consultancy
- Invitation to workshop (vents on lawn)
A Role for Mapping in Participation?

• The process of commonhold-type entities differs from standard processes/concepts of participation

• Yet, we could use the method in situations in which encounter questions relating to multiple scales, arenas/social worlds and events unfolding along a timeline

• If participation is defined as participating in decision-making and change*, the diagrams – as mappings of decisions and of change – engage with the very substance of participatory processes

Fernández Prajoux, Viviana (2014) Community Participation on public space, Oikonet Conference Barcelona, p.4
also: [Unger, Hella von (2014) Partizipative Forschung, pp.40, 47]
A Role for Mapping in Participation?

• Empowerment/ capacity-building:
  
  – making the mechanisms and behaviours we use to control change visible
  – acting as memory device supporting a process of collective learning
  – identifying conditions of resistance that reside in systems to open up new paths towards change

• no specialist knowledge needed: we can simply „do“ maps

• The collective production of maps constitutes an act of change in itself.