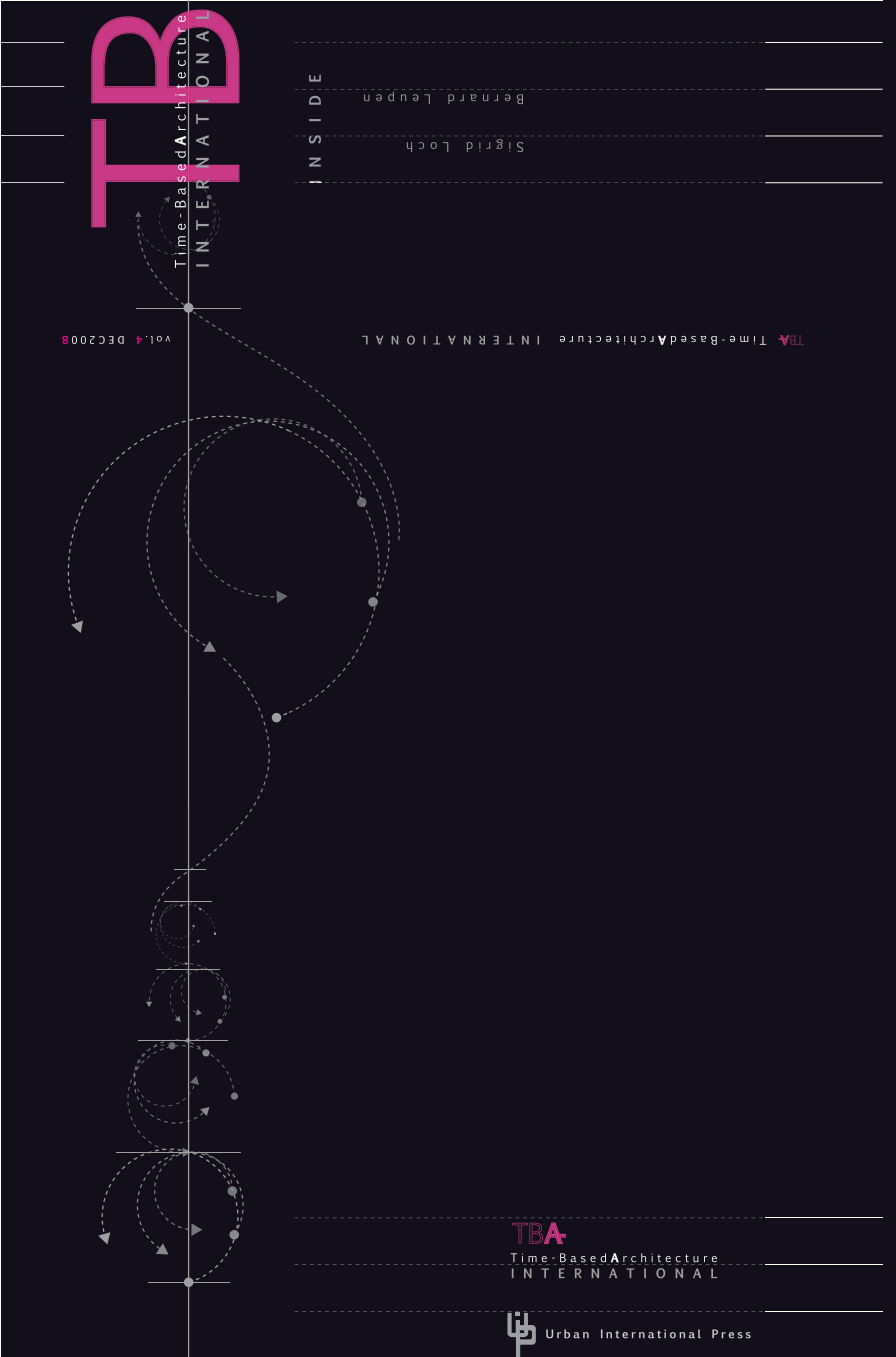




Flexible dwellings in
Germany, Austria and Switzerland
Guest editor: Sigrid Loch

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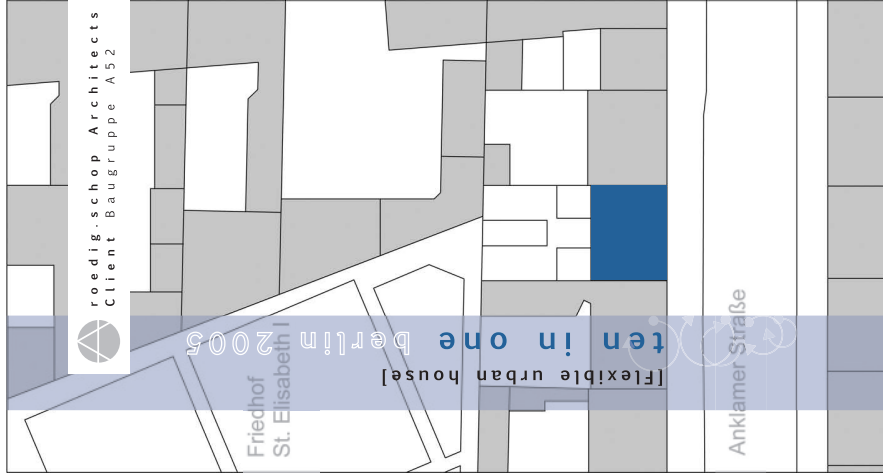
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yourself in turn is only made possible by the particular way that this participation works and the close contacts between architects and users that it creates.

Experience from projects in Germany in the last ten years shows that using a building cooperative can save around 10-20 % on average on normal house prices.

Another particular quality factor is the individual influence those who will ultimately use the housing have in the process of designing it. This makes it possible to take what individual residents want into account and to give them a say in who will live there.

The vanguard projects in recent years in the southern German cities of Freiburg and Tübingen have been followed by many more initiatives in larger German towns, so building cooperative developers are slowly starting to have an impact on local housing markets.

In Berlin, self-build associations are still a relatively new phenomenon, although one which is definitely expected to become increasingly important in future, given that prices in the housing market are rising steadily and there are around a thousand sites currently lying undeveloped in the city.

Berlin's municipal development authorities are now supporting private initiatives too, as they have found in recent years that building cooperatives encourage a resident structure of responsible home owners who have a great interest in their housing environment and commit themselves to it actively.

Project aim: designing together
Architects Christoph Roedig and Ulrich Schop saw their first new building project – the 'ten in one' building cooperative project – as a kind of 'stacked own homes'. As they saw it, the project was primarily about 'bringing suburban living to a central inner city area.'

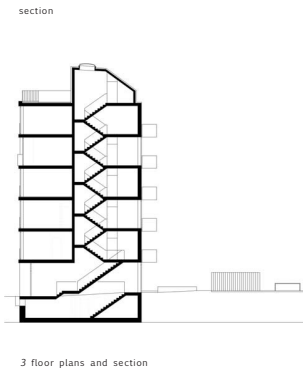
Another aim was to involve individual clients in the project development and planning process and make them good neighbours through building together. This makes this project a model for the new trend of creating inner city building cooperative projects in Germany.

The Mitte ('Central') district of Berlin, in which roedigschop created their 'ten in one' urban house as both architects and clients, is currently made up of nearly 60% single households, and has one of the highest turnover rates in the city. However, those who live in this project will definitely stay tied to their particularly communal 'own homes'.

Building cooperatives are one way of building housing cost-effectively, especially because they cut out agents' and developers' fees. In addition, doing more work for yourself often reduces costs; and putting more work in

- 1 ten in one, site plan
 - 2 ten in one, street view
- The individual residential units are reflected in the slightly differently divided floor façades.





In Berlin, for example, a public office has been set up to advise building cooperatives as part of the 'building gap' campaign. The German architects' centre, Berlin, also ran an exhibition with current self-build association projects in 2007, and issued a practical guide with essential information for those interested. (Ring, Kristien (eds.): aufeinander.bauen [building on one another]: DAZ Berlin, 2007)

Private initiatives have created many innovative, cost-effective inner city residential buildings in recent years, like this Ten in One project by roedig.schop.

To realise their project, at Anklamer Strasse 52, Berlin Mitte, the architects set up the design company A52 GbR with ten future residents in 2003. Through paying contributions when they joined, the members of A52 GbR made it possible to finance buying the land and designing the building through to applying for planning permission.

It was only when they bought the land in November 2003 and converted the design company to a building cooperative at the same time that the members committed themselves to building through to completion. In May 2005, the building cooperative then became an owners' association, with each member now free to dispose of their own private property.

Involving those who would subsequently own properties early on made it extremely cost-effective to build, because the self-build association could

handle the project development, project management and some construction work itself.

Project aim: individual, flexible living
Each of the six residential floors has a total floor area of 135 m², which is accessed centrally, so it can also be divided into two residential units. At present, most of the floors are used by a single occupant, but residents want to remain flexible and be able to split areas off should their living situations change at a later date. Being able to split off part of the apartment to let or sell it also means that the residents have financial security.

To allow wet rooms to be positioned flexibly, the building systems can be run from the utility shafts to different sides of the building, so kitchens and bathrooms can be positioned inside or on the façade side, as desired.

Between the load bearing structural firewalls, stairwell and lift core, a 2.80 m high, level, pillar-free space is created in which rooms can be divided flexibly, so that apartment sizes and layouts can be changed and redesigned in the longer term. The floor plan and fitting out of individual apartments were designed with users individually, but there is one aspect that is common to all apartments – the walls bordering on the stairwell have been left in their rough as-built state.

In this urban house, the ground floor has also been used for living, although the ground floors are part of maisonettes, making the first floor more private and secluded. On the side facing the road, the ground floor façade is more heavily enclosed,



with higher windows so that no-one can see in through.

On the other hand, the ground floor location has a particular quality all its own thanks to its direct relationship with the communal outside area at the back of the building, bordering on the heavily planted St. Elisabeth's graveyard. The floor is therefore oriented strongly towards the garden side at the back and, like the apartments above it, has full-height window sections within the plastered limestone façade opening onto this prospect.

Particular luxury: communal areas

As well as the gardens, the roof terrace at over 100 m² provides a communal area where residents and their guests can meet. There is also a guest apartment in the penthouse, available to all residents if required. As well as the costs involved, providing these particular communal areas is also designed to make up for the difference in residential location quality between the ground floor and fifth floor.

The generous stair platforms on the floors are also designed to provide spaces in which the private and communal areas can communicate spontaneously.

The façade: individuality through having a game with rules

In creating their design, the architects also aimed at reflecting the individuality of the layouts – within preset

4 View of communal roof terrace
photo Andrea Kroth
www.andreakroth.de

5 View from kitchen to façade
photo Gianni Plescia





6 Residential unit on fourth floor, view along façade through spatial sequence
photo Andrea Kroth. www.andreakroth.de



7 View from the stairwell, photo Andrea Kroth. www.andreakroth.de



8 Ground floor residential unit, view from bathroom to area out back
photo Andrea Kroth. www.andreakroth.de



9 View of maisonette stairs, photo Andrea Kroth. www.andreakroth.de



design rules, of course – in the façades themselves. The aim was not to have each residential unit shouting outwardly, but fitting playfully into a connected overall picture. Hinting at each residential unit sensitively was achieved by making the façade an interplay of window sections and integrally coloured eternit wall panels.

The façade is also differentiated through the depth of the building. The windows are either flush with the front of the curtain façade panels or with the inside wall. The inside windows with their steel front projections can be swung through 180°, so that, when they are opened, they create a kind of 'loggia-like' area without affecting the ability to use the inside space flexibly.

'Stepping outside the façade' in these little projections extends the private space outside so to speak, creating a relationship with the city.

For their contribution in building a cost-effective and yet sophisticated flexible living design, roedig.schop architects were awarded the Deutschen Bauherrenpreis (German Building Award) for 2006, amongst others.

Sigrid Loch and roedig.schop architects

10 View from Anklamerstrasse

photo Stefan Müller

11 Ground floor façade on Anklamer Strasse

photo Andrea Kroth. www.andreakroth.de

