The period of socialist rule in Vienna, Austria, in the 1920s has been dubbed “Red Vienna.” The socialist city government’s longest-lasting legacy in the Austrian capital is the gemeindebauten, or large public housing projects built to house refugees flowing into the city following Austria-Hungary’s loss in World War I. The gemeindebauten were more than a quick solution to the city’s housing shortage: their design and the social programs they housed were meant to indoctrinate their residents in socialist values and pave the way for socialist dominance over all of Austria.

Vienna was a city in crisis. Following the Austro-Hungarian Empire’s defeat in World War I, the city, once the cosmopolitan center of a multi-ethnic world power, had deteriorated into an impoverished, starving, and disease-stricken capital of a small rump state. Competing conservative and liberal factions struggled for control of the national government, as the threat of civil war or a workers’ revolution loomed. A flood of German-speaking refugees increasingly strained the city’s already overcrowded housing as they fled the former provinces of the Empire. Amidst this tension and disorder, a short-lived coalition of conservative parties and the socialist Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei Österreichs (SDAPÖ) managed to bring stability to the fledgling republic and stave off civil unrest and international intervention. Though its national prominence ended after the collapse of the coalition in 1920, the SDAPÖ’s support among the urban working class kept it in control of Vienna through the next decade. The era of SDAPÖ dominance in the city, characterized by the implementation of the party’s socialist ideology, has been dubbed “Red Vienna.”

The centerpiece of SDAPÖ municipal policy in Vienna, and the party’s most lasting impact on the city, was the series of public housing complexes, or gemeindebauten, constructed during the party’s fifteen year reign. These ambitious projects dwarfed contemporaneous efforts by other European cities to construct cheap and efficient housing for workers in both their scale and ideological ambition. In a city with little more than two million inhabitants, the SDAPÖ constructed 64,125 housing units, which housed as much as one-eighth of the city’s population before the party’s banishment by the fascists in 1934. For the leaders of Red Vienna, these municipal housing projects were more than just a humanitarian necessity for their people; they were an important component of the SDAPÖ’s strategy for gaining socialist control of the entirety of Austria.

Amartya Sen’s “capability approach” provides a useful framework for understanding the intentions of the SDAPÖ and the purpose of the gemeindebauten. Believing that the only path to socialist ascendancy in Austria was a “slow revolution,” or gradual change within the existing state apparatus, SDAPÖ leaders worked to educate workers on the benefits of socialism, and lead them to value socialist principles. Red Vienna’s leaders wanted new housing to provide more than just an adequate roof over their citizens’ heads; it was constructed to give them the tools to better themselves and live an ideal socialist lifestyle. Because socialism was new to Austrians, SDAPÖ had to instill its ideas about the proper role of the citizenry and the proper socialist way of life in the Viennese. The gemeindebauten served the dual purpose of providing housing for the Viennese while also indoctrinating them with socialist values and giving them the foundation needed to thrive under the new political leadership.

BACKGROUND

All of Austria faced profound challenges and changes following Austria-Hungary’s defeat in World War I. Once the heartland and power center of a large and multi-ethnic empire, the newly-declared Austrian Republic was formed from only the German-speaking territories of the old monarchy. Deprived of its former imperial territories, the rump state faced an economic crisis from a lack of the natural resources that had once driven the imperial economy. As economic opportunities in the countryside shrank, the population of Vienna swelled. German speakers from the former imperial provinces fled the newly created ethnostates of Eastern Europe and flooded into the capital of the new republic, straining already scarce resources and overwhelming the limited housing stock of the capital city.
Liberals faced the threat of attack from conservative economic elites, the powerful Catholic Church, and the traditionally-minded Austrian provinces, while conservatives faced the real possibility of a Bolshevik-style revolt by urban workers inspired by contemporaneous events in Bavaria and Hungary. To maintain stability in the fledgling Republic, the conservative Christlichsoziale Partei and liberal SDAPÖ formed a coalition government that resolved the worst of the immediate crises facing the nation. The SDAPÖ only remained powerful at the national level for a few years, losing its place in the coalition government by the end of 1920, but it held power in the city and province of Vienna throughout the decade and up to its disbandment by Austrian fascist forces in 1934.

The SDAPÖ managed to deftly balance the interests of laborers and the urban bourgeoisie in the administration of Vienna. While it believed that the socialist movement would grow and ultimately gain control of the country, it hoped to bring about this socialist victory through a “slow revolution” that worked within the existing state to foster socialist orthodoxy among the workers, not in a dramatic and violent revolution to overthrow the existing state apparatus. SDAPÖ leaders realized conservative forces in the country were too strong to be ousted by a socialist revolution, and any conflict would drag the nation into civil war, which would ultimately be decided by the intervention of the victorious nations of World War I, who, fearing the spread of socialism further into Western Europe, would no doubt favor the nation’s conservatives.

This recognition that a social and cultural, not political, revolution was the best means to socialist ascendancy in Austria was a central tenet of the political philosophy of the SDAPÖ, a set of beliefs historians have dubbed “Austromarxism.” This philosophy governed the policies of the SDAPÖ, including its response to the housing shortage plaguing the city of Vienna. The writings of Viennese political thinkers in the decades leading to World War I developed the core principles of Austromarxism. The four men with the strongest influence over the movement—Otto Bauer, Max...
Adler, Karl Renner, and Victor Adler—all lived, studied, and wrote in Vienna in the waning days of the Empire. Their professors at the University of Vienna and the cultural milieu of the city inspired their beliefs. The grandeur and elegance of the city’s cosmopolitan center under Imperial control contrasted sharply with the expanding industrial suburbs crowded with factories and dank tenements.

Otto Bauer and his counterparts were also profoundly impacted by the cultural heritage that surrounded them in Vienna. As one of the leading centers of culture and learning in the German-speaking world, nineteenth-century Vienna was a source of pride for German intellectuals. Removed from the Western centers of Paris and London, Bauer and other Austromarxists were uninspired by the enlightenment ideals that had spurred revolution and social and political change in their western neighbors. They looked to their Germanic cultural heritage for inspiration. The paternalistic and controlling role they envisioned for the state when formulating their policies for the city of Vienna stemmed from this reliance on Germanic, not Western, teachings. Their pride in the cultural contributions of the German-speaking people is also evident in their effort to educate Viennese residents of municipal housing in high German culture as well as socialist values, and their tendency to look towards elite Viennese architecture for inspiration when designing the gemeindebauten.

Otto Bauer became the leading voice of Austromarxism following the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and his writings overshadowed other voices in defining the movement and its central beliefs. Bauer was a proponent of what he called the “third way,” a political philosophy that sought a compromise between the radical Marxism of Bolshevik communism and the more conservative movement of social democracy. His path towards socialist dominance of the Austrian state followed an initial compromise between workers and the bourgeoisie who economically dominated Vienna, while also fostering socialist and cultural education of the laborers before the eventual socialist dominance of the Austrian state. Bauer was a key player in the SDAPÖ policy of tempering and outmaneuvering radical leftist movements and demonstrations, relying instead on public programs that both engendered loyalty to the SDAPÖ-dominated city government and educated Viennese workers on their Austrian heritage and socialist philosophy.

The most pressing issue facing the Austrian state and the city of Vienna in the years following World War I was a drastic housing shortage. Vienna had industrialized and grown rapidly before the war, expanding to over two million inhabitants by 1910. Housing construction failed to keep pace with the ever-growing need, and informal tent camps of urban migrants formed on the city’s periphery. The shortage was exacerbated by the war, as raw materials were diverted to the war effort and nearly all construction was halted in the capital. The situation only worsened after the war’s end, as German speaking refugees flooded the city. Rent control measures implemented during the war to curb rapid inflation meant those with housing no longer needed to take on boarders to afford rent. What little housing was available for the city’s working class was overcrowded and outdated. The tenements that proliferated in the decades before the war in the new industrial suburbs on the city’s edge were considered some of the worst in Europe. Erected as quickly and cheaply as possible by bourgeois landlords, they crowded large, multi-generational families into the small apartments with little access to natural light or fresh air. Tenement apartments were not much more than one long narrow room perpendicular to a central hallway that ran the length of the building. Most of these tenement apartments had no plumbing, electricity, or gas, and all the units in a hallway shared communal toilets.
THE CAPABILITY APPROACH

The socialist leaders of Red Vienna recognized the drastic need for new housing in the city. Most immediately, new housing would pacify restive radical leftist groups who wanted more dramatic social change than the SDAPÖ. More importantly, though, it would give SDAPÖ leaders the means to indoctrinate workers with socialist beliefs and engender loyalty to the party and its ultimate dream of political supremacy within Austria. While the SDAPÖ recognized the humanitarian necessity of providing housing for the city’s poor and working class, it did not discuss its plans using the language of human rights. Thus, a human rights discourse is not the correct lens through which to analyze its actions and motivations.

Is there, then, a different way to understand the SDAPÖ’s dual desire to provide for the basic needs of the city’s disadvantaged residents while also educating them in socialist values and their cultural heritage? The philosopher and economist Amartya Šen provides a useful framework for analyzing the SDAPÖ’s motivations for constructing the gemeindebauten with his “capability approach.” Developed by Šen and expanded on by others, the capability approach offers an alternative structure for understanding the importance of social and economic development to human rights. The capability approach suggests that economic development and opportunity can be measured in terms of “capabilities.” Capabilities are described as a person’s “freedoms or opportunities to achieve ‘functionings,” which Šen characterizes as “various states of human beings and doing that a person can undertake.” Most simply, the capability approach measures a person’s social, political, and economic opportunity through his or her ability to attain basic human needs and achieve a lifestyle that is deemed culturally valuable.
Red Vienna’s gemeindebauten were an attempt by SDAPÖ leaders to provide capabilities for the city’s working-class laborers. Though they did not use the anachronistic language of the capability approach, the goals of the socialist municipal leaders mesh well with Sen’s theory. The city housing projects provided for the basic needs of their residents, while giving citizens the tools to better themselves and achieve an ideal lifestyle. The gemeindebauten not only provided the means for cultural and social betterment, but were meant to redefine the culturally ideal lifestyle. If Vien­nese workers were going to lead the socialists to national dominance, they had to understand the values of socialism and be made to live in a socialist way. The municipal housing projects performed the dual role of providing for and reshaping the cultural ideals of the Viennese working class.

THE GEMEINDEBAUTEN
The most radical features of the gemeindebauten were the communal facilities and amenities they offered their residents. While all apartments had kitchens, housing complexes also provided common dining halls where residents could congregate and join in group meals. These halls could be used for festivals and celebrations during national holidays and served as gathering places. In the hours between meals, dining rooms were transformed into cafes modeled after Vienna’s famous coffee houses, furnished with a wide array of SDAPÖ-approved newspapers and publications.30 Many of the housing blocks included concert and lecture halls, where leftist intellectuals spoke on the benefits of a socialism and ensembles performed pieces from the city’s illustrious musical history.

These communal spaces were the hallmark of the gemeindebauten and were featured heavily in advertisements and newspaper articles touting the new facilities. Advertisements and propaganda surrounding the new municipal housing blocks proliferated.30 Newspapers and other publications disseminated by the SDAPÖ touted the benefits of living in the new municipally-built and administered projects, and demonized the old tenements of the prewar city. The images of these new housing projects promoted a vision of modernity, progress, and communal harmony.31 Common social spaces and amenities, not private domestic spaces, were the predominant themes of these advertisements, propagating the socialist ideals of a communally-centered life, one spent among other socialist citizens in common spaces, not alone or with family in private quarters.32 Communal spaces were the centers of daily life in the gemeindebauten, and were meant to foster social­ization among neighbors, all under the watchful eye of the party.

The gemeindebauten provided more than just opportunities for communal leisure and learning, they offered residents a wide range of services within the same complex. They contained communal laundry facilities, with state-of-the-art equipment. Beyond the communal kitchens, laundries, and bathing facilities, the municipal housing complexes offered a myriad of other necessities to their residents, ranging from childcare facilities and clinics to libraries.33 These facilities provided invaluable services to the residents of the gemeindebauten, while providing SDAPÖ leaders with opportunities to influence citizens and instruct them in the socialist principles crucial to the party’s ultimate goal of regaining national dominance.34 By providing these services to municipal apartment residents, SDAPÖ leaders hoped to engender loyalty to the party and gain support for their broader reforms.

Communal facilities and in-house services were one facet of socialist leaders’ goal of transforming Austrian society and radically departing from centuries of tradition. This included altering the role of women in the home.35 Tasked with cleaning, cooking, and doing laundry, lower-class women had little opportunity to take part in the cultural or political life of the city. Many of the innovative features included in plans for the gemeindebauten aimed to free women from the “tyranny of domestic labor,” and allow them to become more active in city life.36 The earliest public housing projects in Red Vienna called for professionalized housework.37 In these early units, women employed by the city cooked daily communal meals for the facility, collected and cleaned laundry, and even cleaned individual apartments. The party intended for women to spend their newfound leisure in the learning and social spaces programmed into the housing blocks. These early attempts at totally freeing working-class women from domestic chores through professionalized housework proved too expensive to be viable on a large scale, but the aim of lessening women’s domestic burden and bringing them into the public sphere was realized in later housing schemes.38

Though they could not abolish the domestic chores of the working class, later gemeindebauten did literally transform the visibility of household labor and importance of women in everyday life. In pre-war tenements, long, narrow apartments were lined along a central hallway that ran through the building. Kitchens were typically the room nearest to the central hallway, while the bedrooms lined the outside walls. Because they were in the center of the building, kitchens had no windows and were typically dark and cut off from the outside street life. The women relegated to these spaces had little access to the city outside their apartments and their plight was easily hidden from the view of the passing public.39 In contrast, new housing had windows in every room, and often had balconies on or near the kitchen.40 This drew women’s domestic work into public view so that they could socialize with those outside their window and observe the life of the surrounding city.
Historians continue to debate the benefit of the housing reforms for working-class women. Despite good intentions and progressive rhetoric, their roles as mothers and wives continued to define life for women in the *gemeindebauten*. Amenities meant to relieve women in the housing blocks proved to be restrictive and made engagement in public and city life difficult. Child-care facilities were closed on holidays, and time in the communal laundries was limited to one day a week, curtailing women’s leisure time for political or cultural pursuits. Historians like Helmut Gruber argue that resettlement in city housing projects destroyed the tight-knit communal bonds that had existed among women in the tenements. Though their work was confined to the inner recesses of tenement apartments, women socialized in the central corridor that ran through the building and formed bonds that alleviated some of the burdens of daily chores. Women might agree to watch their neighbors’ children while they shopped or were ill. Tenements, though overcrowded, might house large extended families who could share the responsibilities for household chores. Gruber argues that the SDAPÖ *gemeindebauten* refocused this reliance on others within the community towards reliance on the socialist party and its city government. By providing only small apartments that could house no more than a single nuclear family, the new housing project broke up the large extended families found in the tenements. By replacing long central corridors with landings that served only three or four flats, SDAPÖ designers lessened opportunity for informal socialization with close neighbors.

Others counter that this argument romanticizes the appalling conditions of life in the tenements and that the *gemeindebauten* reshaped the lives of Viennese working-class women for the better. Tenements rarely had running water or electricity, while new city-built units had plumbing, electricity, and gas appliances. Tenements had been dark, and women had been relegated to the interior spaces of the building, away from public life. In the *gemeindebauten*, every room had a window, so units were filled with light; even while doing household chores, women could interact with their neighbors and be a part of city life. Laundry facilities were new and equipped with the latest appliances and housed in large, well-ventilated, brightly lit rooms. Though they may not have been completely freed from household tasks, women still enjoyed more leisure time, opportunities for education, and cultural and political engagement in the new housing projects.

While socialist leaders aimed for a radical departure from traditional roles for women and old-fashioned lower-class housing, the *gemeindebauten* designs were rooted in the past and in the architectural heritage of the city. SDAPÖ policy, which included the dissemination of high culture among the working class, led the designers and leaders of Vienna’s socialist government to appropriate forms and styles from the city’s wealthy neighborhoods for use in the municipal housing projects. The apartments and townhomes of the urban elite were concentrated in the city center and had developed into a distinct typology in the century of urban growth preceding World War I. *Gemeindebauten* planners looked to the layout and forms of these middle and upper-class apartment complexes in part because of their efficiency and healthfulness, but also to allow working-class Viennese to connect with the cultural heritage of their nation’s upper class.

This inspiration manifested itself in the *gemeindebauten’s* courtyards, which had been a hallmark of the city center apartments of the urban elite. In contrast to the dark and stuffy interiors of the prewar tenements, which possessed only a few windows in the rooms along the buildings’ outer edges, bourgeois apartments were well lit and ventilated. However, the courtyards that allowed light into interior rooms were impractical and uneconomical in the prewar tenements because they reduced the amount of buildable land available for apartments. This was of little consequence to socialist municipal leaders when designing the *gemeindebauten*. The city-administered housing projects were heavily subsidized, with no intention of generating income for the city. The economic pressures that precluded courtyards from earlier tenements were non-issues for SDAPÖ leaders, who readily incorporated courtyards into nearly all of their public housing designs.

The central courtyards of the *gemeindebauten* provided more than just air and light for residents; they acted as a communal gathering space and “public living room” for the housing complex. While they may have been inspired by the apartment houses of the city’s elite, they radically differed from earlier projects in their public nature. Courtyards in the prewar apartments of the city’s well-to-do were almost always private, accessible to only the lucky residents of the expensive ground floor apartments. They were the exclusive domain of the building’s owner, who typically occupied an apartment on the ground floor. But in the *gemeindebauten*, courtyards were accessible to all the building’s residents as well as the public. Except for a few early iterations, most of the apartments in the SDAPÖ’s public housing complexes were accessed through the communal courtyard, and the ground floors of the buildings facing the courtyards were home to the complexes’ communal facilities like cafes, lecture and music halls, libraries, childcare facilities, and clinics. Socialization was encouraged in this space, which was always under the watchful eye of the municipal government through concierges and building managers. Courtyards were opened to the public, with large archways leading from the surrounding streets into the parklike space within the complex. This melding of public and private space reinforced SDAPÖ control of the city by encouraging socialization within spaces administered by the city.
Tenement complexes built in the decades preceding World War I were built to maximize profit. With little concern for the health and well-being of residents, land use was maximized, and apartment blocks were constructed as close together as possible. Units that faced the outer edges of a block lot may have received adequate light and fresh air, but those that faced the interior, perhaps only a few meters from the next building on the block, had little access to light, air, or city street life. The residents of these interior-facing blocks were effectively cut off from the surrounding city. The *gemeindebauten* aimed to fix this disparity between interior and exterior-facing units.

Early iterations of socialist municipal housing projects were smaller in scale than the gargantuan projects that characterized Red Vienna. These initial developments were constructed on small plots of land in the city’s industrial suburbs that had been left undeveloped. Squeezing into oddly-shaped parcels like a small triangular lot in Vienna’s Jodlhof district, these early schemes attempted to blend with the surrounding city. But as the need for housing continued to grow and city officials grew more ambitious in their efforts to reshape the city into a socialist showpiece, this effort to meld with the existing city was abandoned. At this time, monumental structures like Karl Marx-Hof began to appear, with little regard for following the existing pattern of urban development. While borrowing forms and organizational concepts from the city’s architectural heritage, especially the apartments of the urban elite, the *gemeindebauten* positioned themselves dominantly onto the urban fabric. By enveloping city streets and incorporating easily accessible public courtyards into their design, the municipal projects blurred the distinction between housing complex and the surrounding city. This dominance of the cityscape by the SDAPÖ’s creations was meant to broadcast the party’s authority to all of Vienna.

Pervasive in all aspects of the *gemeindebauten* design was the ability of city leaders and the housing project managers to heavily monitor and regiment the activity of residents. While the communal amenities and gathering spaces within the municipal housing facilities aimed to better the lives of the Viennese and engender loyalty towards the SDAPÖ, they also acted as mechanisms of control and paternalistic guidance. Building concierges monitored gathering spaces like courtyards and dining halls and reported back to their SDAPÖ superiors on residents who failed to follow rules or actively participate in the communal life of the complex. Children who played on courtyard lawns without permission and women who used laundry facilities on the wrong day could not fail to notice the paternal gaze of the city’s socialist leaders, as manifested in the new massive structures.

The inclusion of courtyards allowed light and air to penetrate interior units, and provided all residents with access to activity outside the apartment, whether that be on the surrounding streets or the bustling communal courtyards. While tenements had effectively given higher status to street-facing units, designers of the *gemeindebauten* democratized the units within the housing complex by not prioritizing one side over the other. One resident characterized the new design by saying “the units no longer had a back, but two fronts.” This design feature reflected the socialist emphasis on commonality among the working classes.

Tenement apartment blocks had been nearly universally organized along a long, central corridor with communal toilet facilities along each end. Breaking with this tradition, socialist designers did away with the central corridor and replaced it with several common stairwells that led to landings on each floor shared by only three or four apartments. Each unit contained a private toilet room, though bathing facilities were usually communal. These stairwells were entered through the complex’s courtyard. By eliminating long central corridors, the municipal housing projects discouraged informal socialization in spaces not easily controlled by the party, and moved nearly all group activity to party-policed areas like courtyards and dining halls.

While the layout of Red Vienna’s municipal housing projects may have drawn inspiration from the city’s past, their monumental scale was unprecedented. Encompassing multiple city blocks, they dwarfed the surrounding earlier developments of private investors and speculators. The immensity of these projects was economical; larger buildings housed more units and more residents, but it also served as a reminder to Viennese residents of the power and authority of the SDAPÖ municipal government and its oversized influence on the city. Deemed “islands of socialism,” the *gemeindebauten* acted as socialist strongholds and power centers throughout the city. Often these projects spanned several city blocks, even crossing busy streets and enveloping them into the complex. Residents of the neighborhoods surrounding the new housing projects could not fail to notice the paternal gaze of the city’s socialist leaders, as manifested in the new massive structures. The act of building itself symbolized the socialists’ control of the city. In the postwar years as Austria’s economy struggled to stabilize and building materials were in short supply, the government was one of the few entities with the financial means to construct anything, much less something as large as the *gemeindebauten*.
could be cited for their infractions and disciplined. Some residents even faced eviction if they continued to disobey complex rules, an alarming threat in a city facing a drastic housing shortage. The SDAPÖ not only provided ample opportunities and resources for the residents of its municipal housing projects to better themselves and become loyal supporters of the socialist regime, but actively policed their lives to ensure they were cooperating.

The ideological impact of socialist leaders and their principles on the design of the gemeindebauten is clear when contrasted with the other public housing schemes developed in Europe during the same period. As all of Europe continued to industrialize, urbanize, and recover from the devastation of World War I, cities across the continent grappled with the same housing shortages as Vienna. These projects, less ambitious in scope than the gemeindebauten, lacked the ideological underpinnings that characterized public housing developments in Red Vienna. In Frankfurt, architect Ernst May spearheaded the construction of over 12,000 new affordable apartments for the city's working-class residents, but these units emphasized efficiency and economics above any ideology. In fact, most of the housing projects developed in Germany, France, and England during the interwar years were designed with affordability and mass production in mind. These units were much cheaper on average than the housing constructed in Vienna, relying on mass-produced components that could be easily installed by small teams of workers. Their designs were inspired by leading modern architects like Peter Behrens and Mies van der Rohe of the Bauhaus school in Dessau. They sought to break with Europe's building traditions by incorporating new forms and building suburban style developments of one or two floor apartments and standalone homes in suburban park-like settings. These movements contrast heavily with the monumental, urban, and labor-intensive construction of the gemeindebauten. While Vienna could have more economically followed the example set by other European public housing initiatives, the ideological mission of Red Vienna's explains the designs the SDAPÖ favored.

Acknowledging that the buildings were not meant to be profitable, the higher cost of construction and labor was of little consequence to SDAPÖ leaders, and in fact worked in their favor to gain support among Vienna's working class. The gemeindebauten demanded many laborers to complete the massive structures, providing jobs in an era of high unemployment and economic depression. Red Vienna's leaders favored large, multi-block housing complexes over the suburban developments of their European peers because it allowed for access to the communal facilities and amenities that were the centerpieces of the Viennese leaders' strategy for educating and bettering the city's residents. And while the large housing blocks may not have adopted the baroque ornamentation of the city's old, upper-class apartments, they did allow for an appropriation of these bourgeois apartments' forms and spatial organizations, connecting working-class citizens with their city's cultural heritage, another key facet of the party'sbildung policy. These differences between the Viennese and other European responses to housing shortages are explained by the SDAPÖ's policy of using public housing to reshape Austrian society.

CONCLUSION

“To give the impression of grandeur without being brutal; to be simple without appearing impoverished; to be rigorous without becoming severe or austere” is how architectural critic Joseph Lux described the challenges facing Red Vienna's leaders as they crafted the city's plan for public housing. He also noted the structures must “give visible expression to the social ideas that such a building should embody.” The SDAPÖ's answers to this lofty goal were the gemeindebauten, massive municipally-built and administered apartment blocks that would eventually house close to thirteen percent of the city's population. Though their design was rooted in the illustrious homes of the Empire's old elite, their size, amenities, and focus on communal living and reliance on the state was unprecedented in Vienna, and indeed in all of Europe. Socialist leaders designed these housing projects not only to provide adequate shelter for the city's citizens, but also to garner support for their cause and better residents intellectually and socially. Beyond providing the means for residents to improve their lives and their understanding of socialist goals, gemeindebauten managers and staff actively policed those who refused to take part in the communal life of the complexes. The gemeindebauten played an important role in SDAPÖ's ultimate goal of achieving national dominance. Though this plan would never reach fruition, the gemeindebauten's lasting legacy can be appreciated in the many surviving, monumental housing blocks that still grace Vienna's city streets.
The Good Life

Endnotes

[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid, 32.
[10] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid, 40.
[19] Ibid, 41.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid, 43.
[28] Ibid.
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[43] Ibid, 81.
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