



CO-CREATION PROJECT “OBERHAUS”

University of Duisburg-Essen, Master of Urban Systems - research seminar results

MAKING HEIMAT GERMANY, ARRIVAL COUNTRY

REFUGEE ACCOMMODATION EVALUATION

Institute for City Planning and Urban Design

Director: J. Alexander Schmidt, Prof. Dr.-Ing.

Booklet concept and coordination

Marielly Casanova

Assistance

Mariana da Cunha

Booklet production: Oberhausen student's group

Salam Armanazi

Malin Fichter

Erida Hoxha

Yvonne Klein

Franziska Sahr

Johanna Soboll

Cooperation partner:

Kitev (Agnieszka Wnuczak, Christoph Stark, Fatemeh Imanifardazar, Ghaith Shahta, Jacqueline Kasper, Simon Mellnich, Gesina Rath)

Research seminar in collaboration with the Deutsches Architekturmuseum

Institute for City Planning and Urban Design, University of Duisburg-Essen

Organization and teaching: Marielly Casanova, Janka Lengyel

Complex urban issues require a comprehensive investigation methodology. The last Venice Architecture Biennale has shown a new phase of the architecture profession. The sole function of architecture as an object is shifting into a powerful tool to encourage collaborative urban development processes. At the same time collaboration goes beyond discussion, it is a re-distribution of responsibilities and a sum of expertise. Personal stories, desires, needs, actions and experiences cannot be represented by plans and sections only, but are incorporated in a comprehensive narrative, which includes a series of political, economic and social arguments and facts. The relevant role of the architect in this process is the mediation of different disciplines in order to clearly represent and communicate criticism, strategies and ideas.

The call for projects in the Venice Biennale achieved the compilation of a series of projects that were implemented all over Germany to accommodate the massive influx of refugees. The aim of this seminar was to document two of these projects along with their social, economic and physical context. The evaluation provides a series of characteristics (positive as well as negative) to learn from and reflect on the complexities behind permanent or temporary housing for refugees and the influence on their integration process.

Making Heimat was a research seminar organized by the Institute of City Planning and Urban Design in the context of the Master of Urban Systems at the University of Duisburg-Essen, from November 2016-January 2017.



Cover design @ Janka Lengyel

Cover image @ Kitev: Fatemeh Imanifardazar / Light Installation @ Christoph Stark



“OBERHAUS” (Oberhausen Hochhaus) Co-creation project

INTRODUCTION

Addressing the refugee crisis and dealing with accommodation needs are the most challenging priorities of European countries, particularly of Germany.

Oberhausen, as part of the state of NRW has a high share of asylum seekers, 172,511 by mid 2016. New initiatives like Kitev (Kultur im Turm e.V.) are finding collaborative ways to integrate. Their approach, named co-creation project, consists of engaging refugees and other residents to renovate a run-down tower building – with a currently negative stereotype – centrally located in Oberhausen old centre. Oberhausen has the highest debt per capita in Germany and taking into account the social situation which is dramatically affected by the financial status of the neighborhood. Thus the framework of the project in one of the poorest areas of Oberhausen faces big difficulties.

BUILDING DATA

Location: Friedrich-Karl-Strasse 4, Oberhausen

Year built: 1950

Typology: Residential building high rise (social housing)

Capacity: 82 apartments

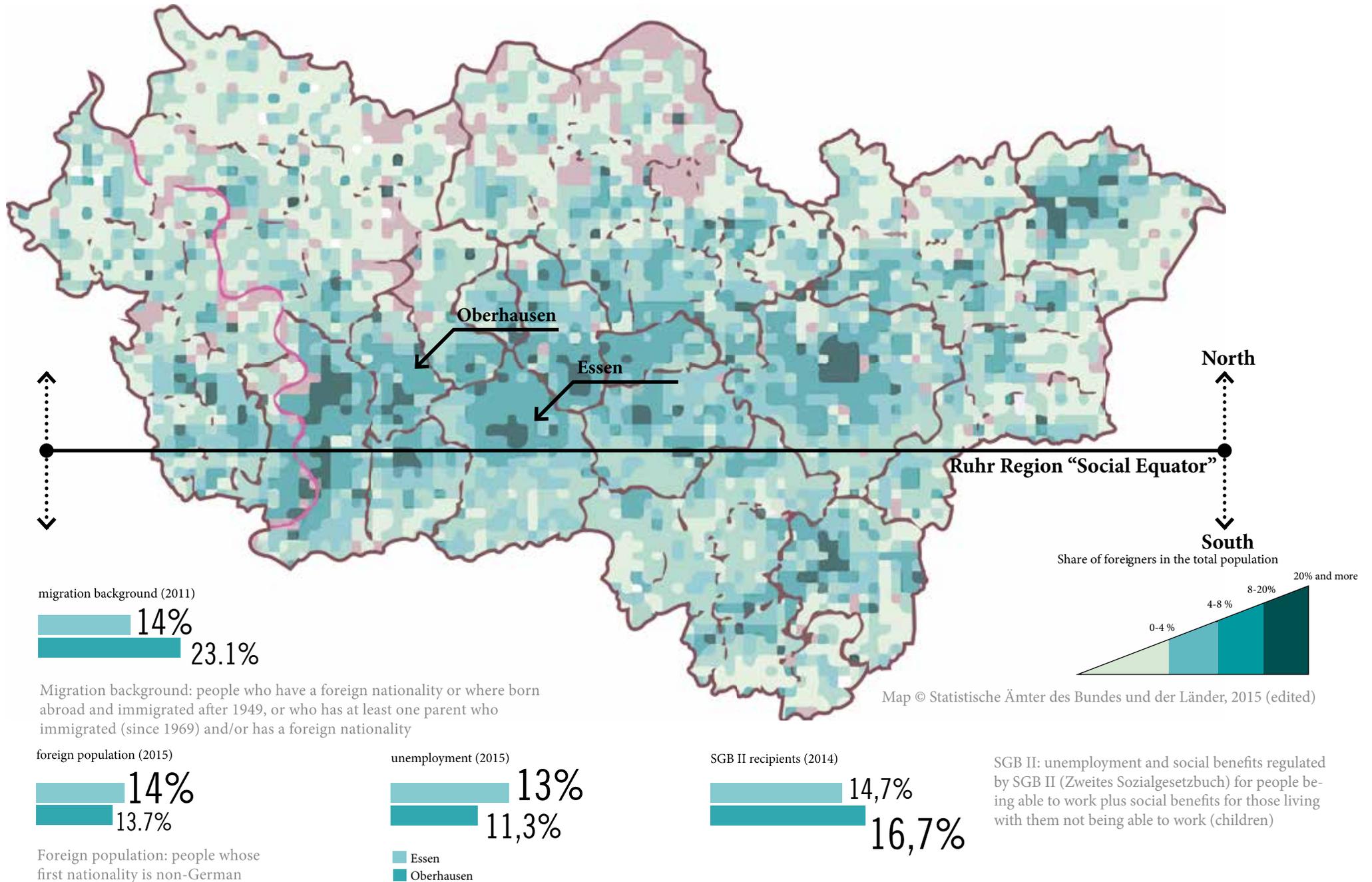
Residents: Multi-cultural, mostly with migration background and refugees

Character: Modern well-designed interiors, damaged by residents

OBERHAUSEN

REGIONAL SCALE

NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE



OBERHAUSEN

CITY SCALE

211.888

Is the total population of Oberhausen

2.593

are refugees

649 From Syria

257 From Afghanistan

257 From Iraq

11.318

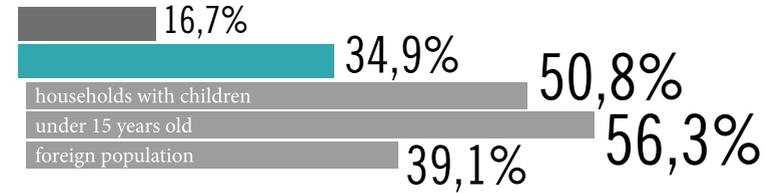
Unemployed people

Source: Oberhausen City Council, Nov 2016
in <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37990864>

In 1902, Oberhausen experienced the first structural change with the closing of ironworks. When the last coal mines and steel works were closed in 1987, Oberhausen had to deal with this definite structural change: A new leisure and shopping centre "CentrO" was founded, creating the quarter "Neue Mitte Oberhausen".

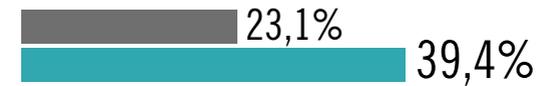


SGB II recipients (2014)



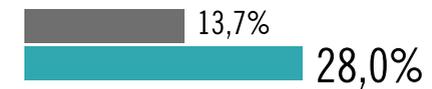
SGB II: unemployment and social benefits regulated by SGB II (Zweites Sozialgesetzbuch) for people being able to work plus social benefits for those living with them not being able to work (e.g. children)

migration background (2011)



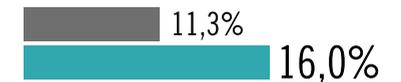
Migration background: people who have a foreign nationality or where born abroad and immigrated after 1949, or who has at least one parent who immigrated (since 1969) and/or has a foreign nationality

foreign population (2015)



Foreign population: people whose first nationality is non-German

unemployment (2015)



It is the most densely settled area within Oberhausen – 13,300 people living on 122 ha (2014). Having to compete with the "Neue Mitte" (CentrO), Alt-Oberhausen centre experienced a strong degradation.

Alt-Oberhausen centre is one of the three original city cores of Oberhausen. The quarter has been developed in 1870 and has grown as a residential area in direct neighborhood to a pedestrian shopping zone.

Source: IT.NRW, RVR-Datenbank, Oberhausener Sozialstrukturatlas

OBERHAUSEN

NEIGHBORHOOD SCALE



1. Central station

walking distance from "Oberhaus": 3 min



5. Library and Volkshochschule

walking distance from "Oberhaus": 4 min

Photo © Erida Hoxha



9. Shopping street "Marktstrasse"

walking distance from "Oberhaus": 8 min

Photos © #1, 9, school Malin Fichter, #5 Erida Hoxha # 17 (<http://www.ruhr-guide.de>) and #20 (<http://www.goruma.de>)

Oberhausen

City Center



- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Central train station | 5 VHS/City library | 9 Altmarkt square | 13 Druckluft | 17 Industrial museum |
| 2 The High-rise building | 6 Police station | 10 AWO | 14 Bero shopping mall | 18 The city hall |
| 3 Post office | 7 Lichtburg Cinema | 11 Swimming pool | 15 SV Concordia Football club | 19 Ebertbad Theater |
| 4 Saporoshje square | 8 Diakonie | 12 Caritas | 16 Altenberg | 20 Oberhausen Theater |

Ghaith Shahta is from Aleppo, Syria. He has been in Germany since one year and a half. He lives in Oberhausen and is working voluntarily in Kitev's project.



17. Industrial museum

walking distance from "Oberhaus": 7 min



School

walking distance from "Oberhaus": 10 min



20. Oberhausen Theater

walking distance from "Oberhaus": 13 min

Sources: Students' own research

OBERHAUSEN NEIGHBORHOOD SCALE -

“The Arrival City is a City within a City”



“Arrival City” Thesis:

“The Arrival City is Affordable”

5.6 Euros/m² average rent index

A decreasingly city population and relatively high tenant turnover in the central area of Oberhausen might have contributed to costs of living being comparatively low in this region. The businesses in and around the main shopping street Marktstraße are also at the bottom end of the affordability scale, examples: Kik, Netto, vegetable markets etc.

Source: www.immobilienscout24.de, prices (December 2014) for Altstadt Mitte and Altstadt Süd

“The Arrival City is on the Ground Floor”

Marktstrasse variety of business and empty shops

There are a variety of shops, bakeries, the Bert-Brecht-Haus, cafés, schools, stores, and markets offering their services on a ground floor-level throughout Alt-Oberhausen. Often the floors above would stand empty. Through a proper renovation and redevelopment efforts plenty of these houses could serve as attractive residential homes.

“The Arrival City is a Network of Immigrants”

20 ethnic shops - 39,4% migration background

Oberhausen itself is an ethnically diverse city and the Alt Oberhausen there is a high-population number with migration background.

Source: IT.NRW, RVR-Datenbank, Oberhausener Sozialstrukturatlas

“The Arrival City is Close to Business”

10 min walking distance

The mixed-use character of the neighborhood allow for plenty of businesses and entrepreneurs to run side by side to the residential streets and schools. However, still Oberhausen lacks job opportunities.

“Arrival City is Informal”

Small Temporary removable ‘shops’

One part of the Alt-Oberhausen is characterized by what it can be defined as ‘ethnic’ economies, i.e. fruit and vegetable markets and Halal markets. But to what extent can we claim that Alt-Oberhausen allows for informal shops and businesses?

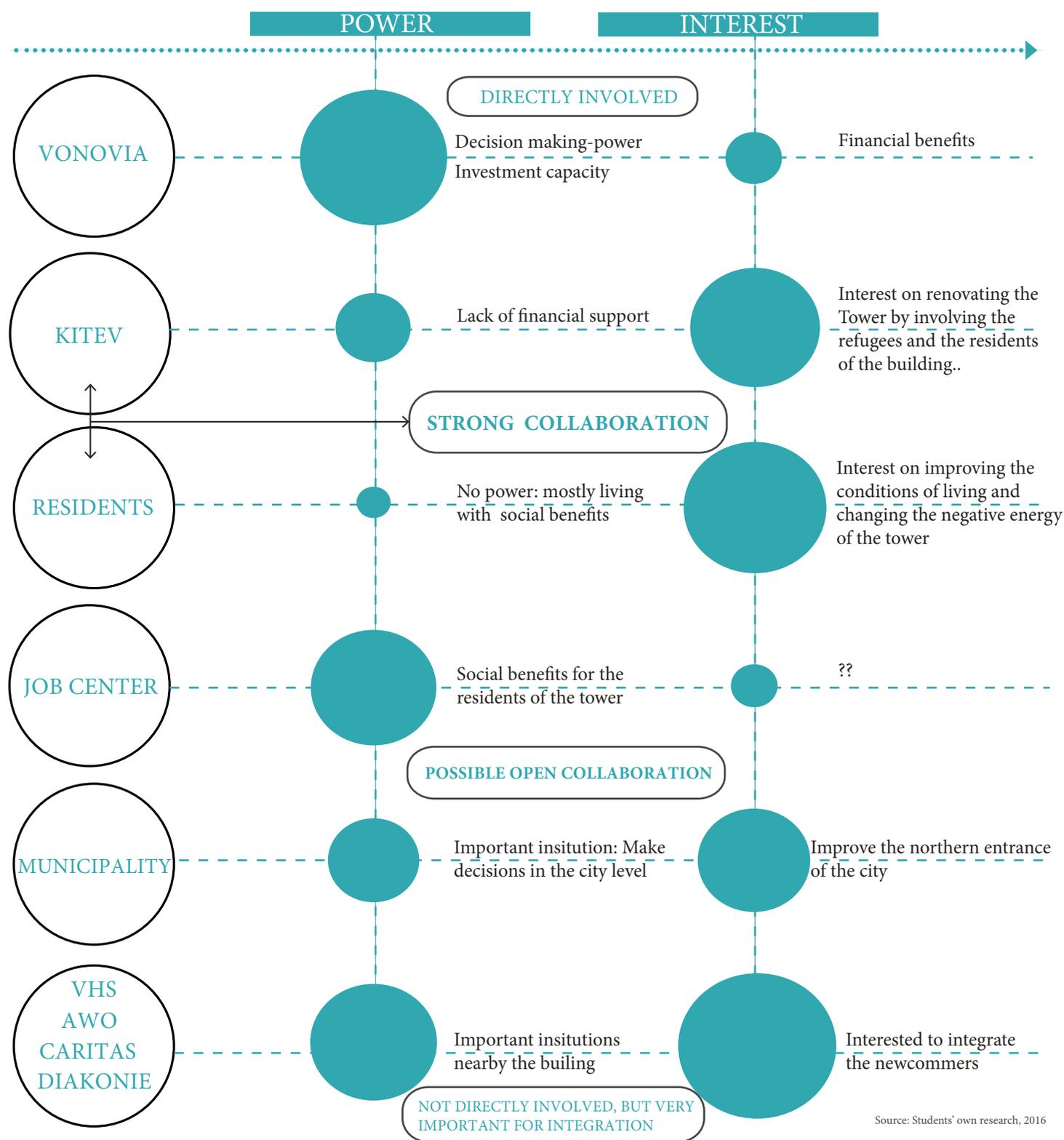
“The Arrival City is Self-Built”

Kitev co-creation

The current renovation project initiated by Kitev is based on co-creation and the participation of current and future resident of the Oberhausen Hochhaus “Oberhaus”.

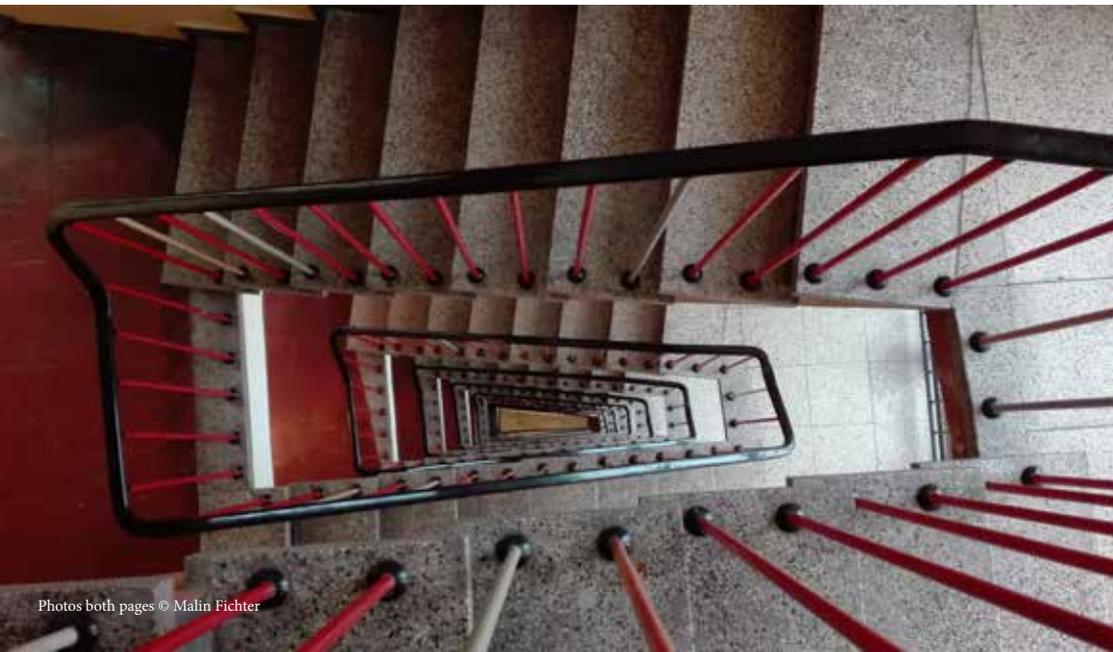
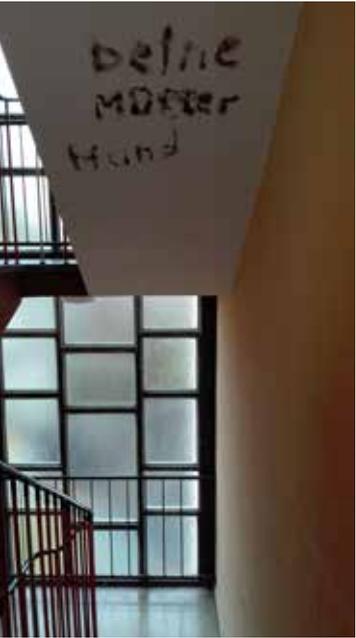
- “Oberhaus” and Kitev
- Institutional buildings
- Mix-use buildings ground floor commercial
- Residential buildings
- Church
- Public spaces/parks
- Ethnic shops
- Educational buildings
- Vacancies on the ground floor

“OBERHAUS” STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS



“OBERHAUS”

THE BUILDING



“OBERHAUS” PEOPLE



Waffle-Party was an initiative to meet the residents and listen to their comments. In fact, since our first visit it was clear that they themselves do not like living in here. Waffle-Party was an important step to get involved with the residents, listen to them and understand their stories.



Photo © Marielly Casanova



Photo © Marielly Casanova

“I have been living here for 33 years. The house was very clean before, but now is very dirty. When we moved in there were mainly retired people. Now there is no control, homeless come in pretending to visit residents and destroy things in the building.” Germany

“I have already 13 years in the tower. I work in a logistics company. I only know 2 of my neighbors. I know many bad stories about the house, one of the residents died because of drugs. In spite the problems, I like to live here even when others tell me to move out. Do not forget: there are many problems, but also many good people in the house.” Ghana

“I don’t know my neighbors and I have no interest in getting to know them, but I love living here. I wouldn’t change anything, I like it old and run down as it is.” Nigeria

“The residents of the tower are always loud and noisy, a lot of drunk people and junkies, the police is there at least once a week.” Employee, business nearby

“The tower used to be very popular in the 1980’s... Now the police is regularly observing the tower because of drug dealing issues and violence.” Business owner nearby

“I arrived 4 years ago in Germany and I have been living in the tower with my pregnant wife and my 3 years old daughter for 8 months now. However, we will move out soon because this house is not good for children. We have strange neighbors, there is too much noise. I had to leave Nigeria because as a Christian my wife’s family doesn’t approve our union. Elisabeth (3) likes her Kindergarten (I walk her or we take public transportation) and she learns German through other children. I sing in a choir every Tuesday and I am attending German courses.” Nigeria

“I only have 5 months living in the tower, but I have been living for 1,5 years in Germany. I only know few of the neighbors, but I like living in this building... I know what Kitev is doing and I am very interested in the project.” Syria

“I have been living in this tower for 13 years. Since the asylum seekers moved in the house, everything got worse, there is noise, dirt and violence. I am scared and disgusted with excrements, urine or vomit in the hallways. I know only 2 persons in the house who are also elderly women... I wish the house gets renovated, cameras installed and people begin to use the key instead of kicking the door open.” Germany

“I don’t like to live here; there is already a year. I am a hairdresser, but I am looking for a job, and I am also learning German... I like to dance, but I have no friends in Germany.” Ghana

“I have been living in the tower for a year now, but I don’t like it.” Syria

“I wouldn’t go to Marktstraße, city centre, central station at night—it’s too dangerous, you could get robbed.” Postbank employee



“OBERHAUS”

KITEV CO-CREATION PROJECT

“Housing projects for vulnerable groups as unemployed, migrants, homeless people, disabled or addicts are mostly based on the idea of welfare and care. In order to protect people in a demanding and challenging society, the responsibility of the people for their environment is taken from them. This manifests itself in less financial investment and a will to produce as little necessary engagement as possible. We observe a reality of lower self-motivation and limited opportunities to become an active member of society. Actual migration is also taken by this logic of helping people and supporting them with an already existing infrastructure. This is taking a lot of energy from the „native“ society. At the same time, the city centre of Oberhausen e.g. has for a long time been lacking a concept of a future use.”

“This is a process. First we had to go in, get in contact with people, then we did the workshop “Mehr [als] Wohnraum!” and 10 days later we got a contract with Vonovia. Now we are moving in... We go step by step.”

“Mehr [als] Wohnraum!”



© Sebastian Becker

“Eventually we will not be only repairing the apartments, but the hallways, the neighborhood and the city”.

“Refugee Kitchen”



© Christoph Stark

“Das E von OB_RHAUSEN”



© Christoph Stark



© Christoph Stark

“They have now the potential to show they are able to fix some defect in the society... There is so much to do.”

The initial idea was to find housing for refugees using the given infrastructure of the tower in the Oberhausen city centre. After a while the members of Kitev realized that there were refugees already living in the building and that the demand for refugee housing in Oberhausen is covered already. Then the idea was not just to renovate the apartments so that refugees could move in, but instead expand the concept by creating training/capacity building for socially disadvantaged people or refugees etc. Another important idea was to create and encourage diversity and counteract stigmatization. Very big problems are thoughts like: “It’s the refugees’ fault” and “Everything is being done for the refugees but who cares for us? They steal our money”. The idea to re-think this perspective is closely connected to the inclusion of socially disadvantaged people, especially (-) the people living in the tower. The Ruhr area needs another structural transformation and that will include the dynamics of various social groups working together.

“We began with nothing, just with spaces, and with people. Mostly poor people are living there, or refugees. This is people who have no money to live somewhere else, the Job Center pays for their rent. No one with a normal salary would live there.”

“Forum Regionum”



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OBERHAUSEN

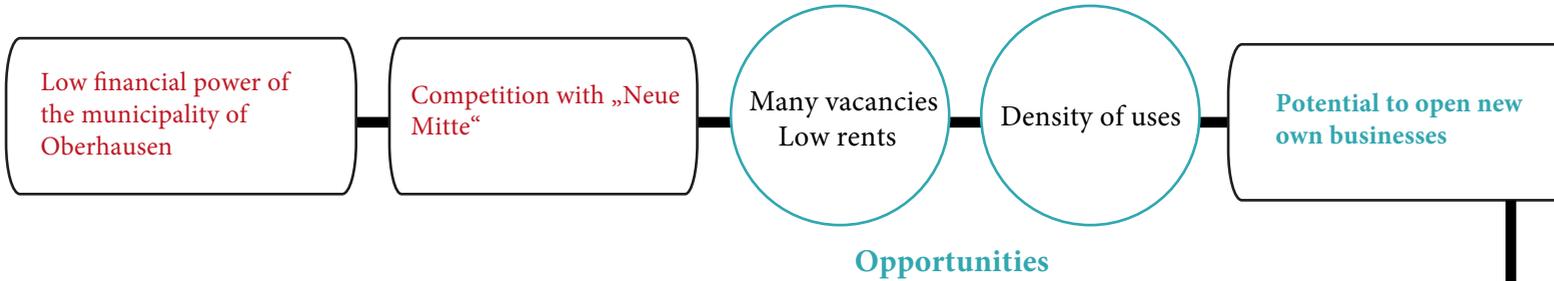
PROBLEMS AND POTENTIALS

Looking into the Future

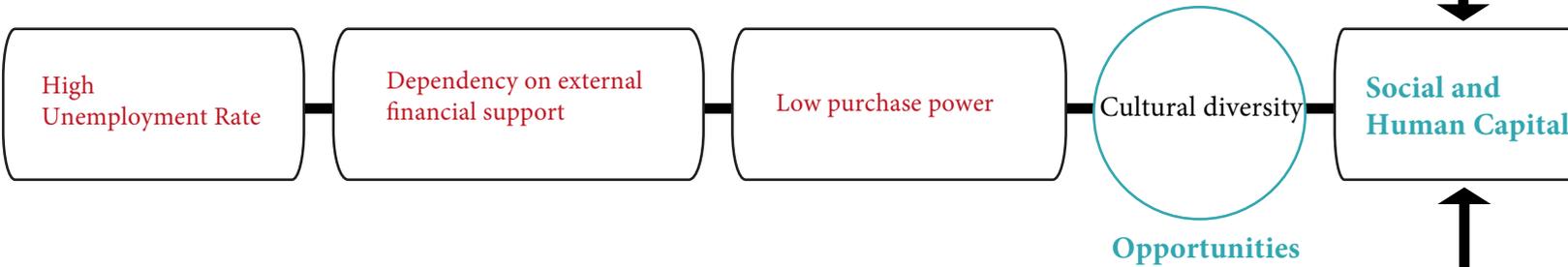
Problems

Potentials

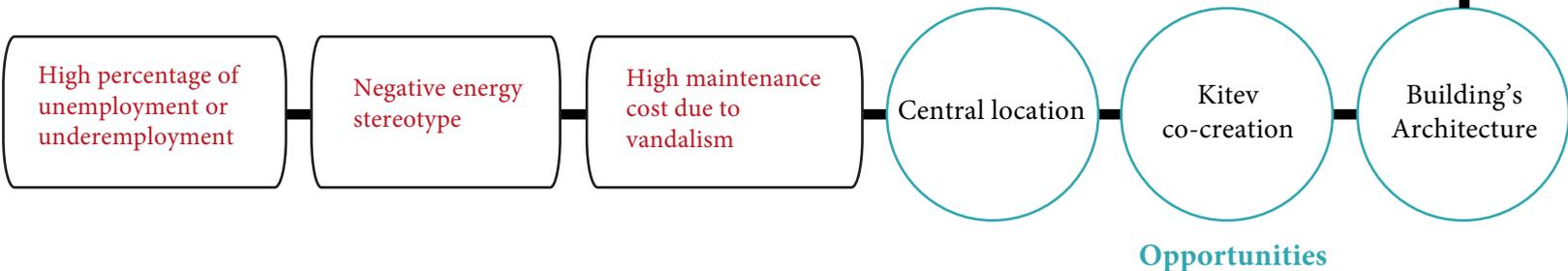
City scale



Neighborhood scale

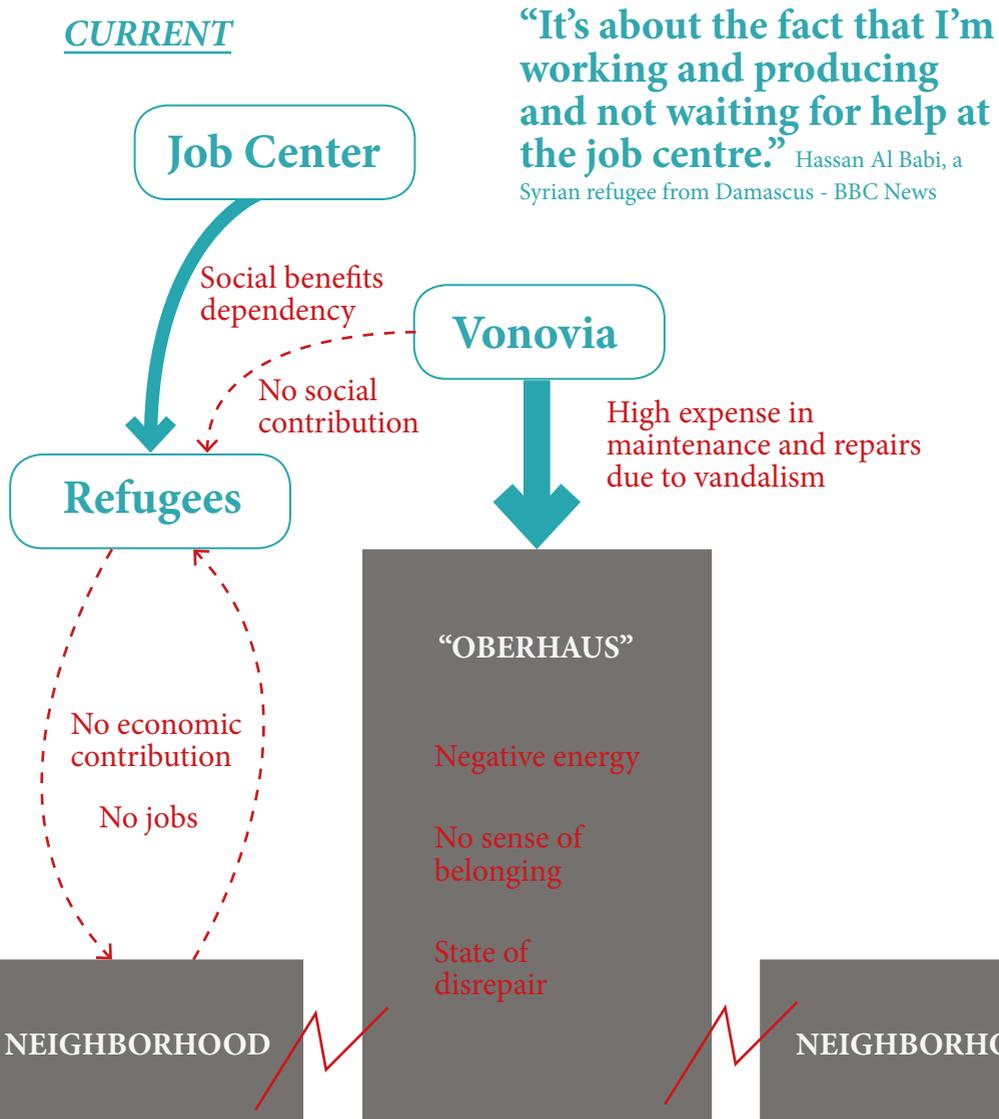


Building scale



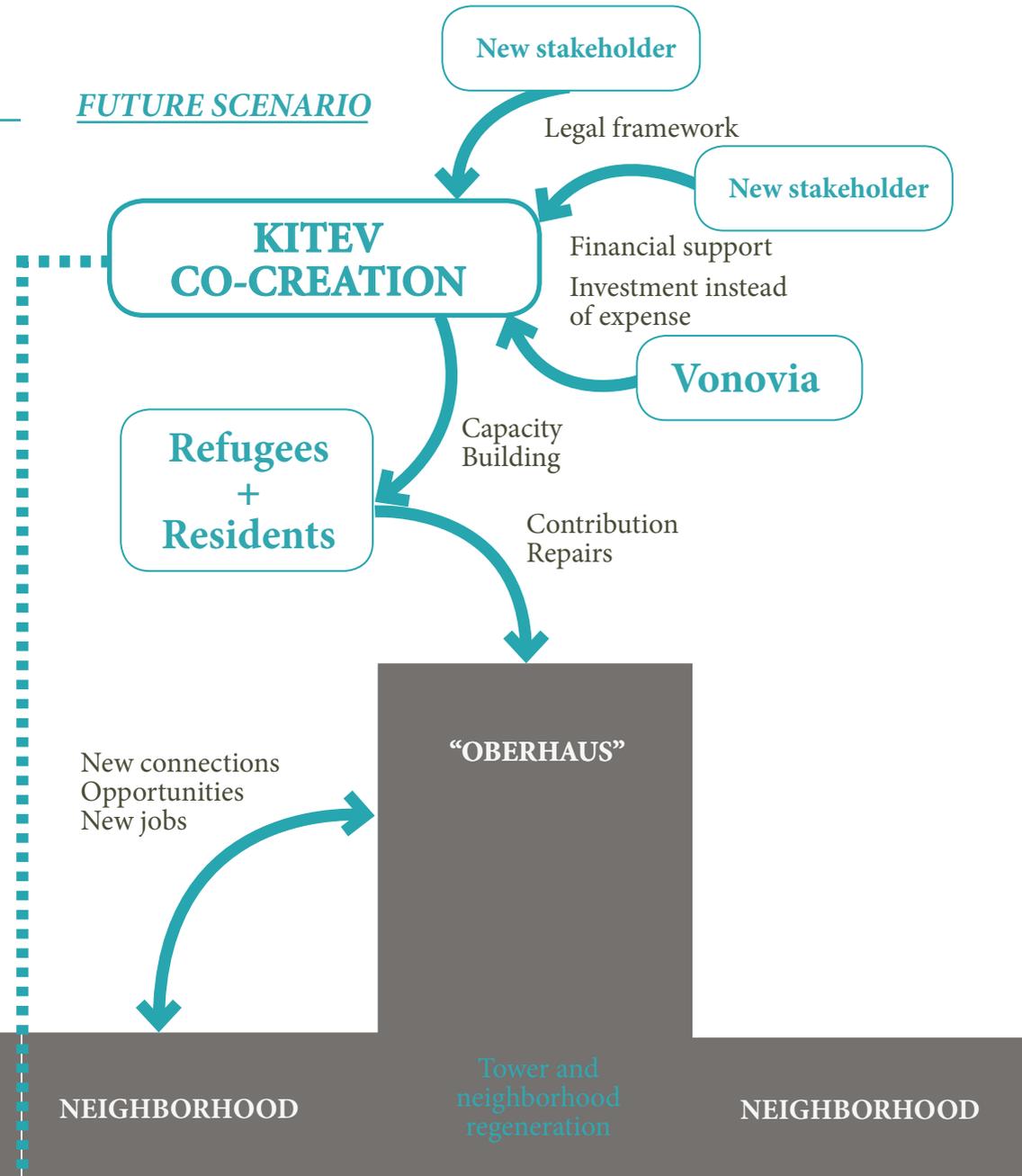
OBERHAUSEN FUTURE SCENARIO

CURRENT



“It’s about the fact that I’m working and producing and not waiting for help at the job centre.” Hassan Al Bab, a Syrian refugee from Damascus - BBC News

FUTURE SCENARIO



No connection/contribution