

Forschungswerkstatt *Krise und Transformation des Eigenheims*

Joint contribution

[07/2023]

Construction Sign

Interdisciplinary research team

For many, the single-family house with a garden represents an almost unchallenged ideal. Yet, often overlooked are its ecological impacts, like land sealing and increased heating demand, economic factors such as the cost of infrastructure development, and societal consequences, including the perpetuation of social inequalities and traditional gender roles.

THESE COSTS ARE BORNE BY SOCIETY AS A WHOLE.



The construction sign on the Campus of the Bauhaus-University Weimar for summer23. Photography (Florian Marenbach)

The eight-member research team has set up a construction sign in Weimar to inform the local community about the various crises associated with homeownership, including social, ecological, and architectural-planning aspects. In an effort to make the research processes, discussions, and internal considerations more accessible and tangible to civil society, the team sought an unconventional medium and format to serve as an intermediary. The construction sign was selected as an ideal platform to present initial findings in a succinct manner and to reach a wider audience beyond academic circles. This medium was specifically chosen for its typical association with promoting the lifestyle of living in a single-family house with a garden.



The construction sign on the Campus of the Bauhaus-University Weimar for summaery23. Photography (Florian Marenbach)

The **five statements** on the construction sign are as follows:

- 01** In Germany, there are 16.1 million single-family houses (SFH), accounting for almost 67% of all residential buildings. They dominate the housing stock.¹ (Destatis, 2022, S.16; Destatis, 2021)
- 02** SFH have a significantly higher land consumption. Their inhabitants live on average in 157 m², almost 79 m² more than in multi-family houses (MFH). (ibid)

- 03** The rural areas in Thuringia are experiencing a continuous population decline. Potentially, 36,000 SFH will be vacant by 2030. However, 1,500 SFH are still being built annually in the Free State. (Thüringer Ministerium für Infrastruktur und Landwirtschaft, 2018, 74f.)
- 04** SFH incur municipal investment costs for roads, sewage, drinking water, and power lines. The development costs for an SFH are 8 times higher than for a compact MFH.² (Bundesstiftung Baukultur, 2018)
- 05** Homeownership reflects high income and wealth inequality in Germany. The median net wealth of real estate owners reached a record high of €364,800 in 2021. For renters, it was €16,200. (Deutsche Bundesbank, 2021)

¹ Inventory of residential buildings in the years 2010 - 2021 with one or two apartments.

² SFH with 1,000 m² of land per housing unit and an MFH with 100 m² of living space per housing unit.

SFH = Single-Family House

MFH = Multi-Family House

Location

The construction sign was situated on the campus of the Bauhaus University Weimar from July to the end of October, coinciding with summer23, the university's annual exhibition. Positioned in an open area accessible to both the university community and external visitors, the construction sign offered preliminary insights into the research findings.

Its placement on a greenfield area, earmarked for densification and development in the university's development plan, highlighted the issues and challenges associated with newly developed single-family house zones on the outskirts of many small towns. The familiar format of the construction sign, coupled with its striking, signal-colored text, initially captured attention, paving the way for a dialogue and discourse on the presented topics.



The construction sign on the main station forecourt. Photography (Florian Marenbach)

Until the end of November 2023, the construction sign was positioned in the forecourt of Weimar's main train station (Schopenhauerstraße 2, 99423 Weimar). The selection of this public urban space was significantly influenced by the political dimension of the topic, underscoring the contentious nature of the content displayed on the sign. After numerous unsuccessful location inquiries, we secured permission for a one-month exhibition period. Despite the challenges faced, we are gratified to have situated our statements at a key infrastructural site in Weimar.

A condensed version of the construction sign's content is also on display as an installation in the Bauhaus Museum. This exhibit was part of the *Wohnen* theme year, showcased in the summer of 2023.

Layout Construction Sign: Enno Pötschke

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