

STS Conference 2015 Abstract

Title: Sustainable Housing and Energy Poverty

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Amongst other requirements, sustainable housing means that windows and doors do not let in draught, a dwelling is free from mould and dampness, a building is well insulated, there is an efficient heating system, and people can keep their home adequately warm during colder periods. In Austria a significant proportion of dwellings fail to fulfil these criteria, therefore the requirement for building renovation is immense.

Under these circumstances, households at risk of energy poverty live mostly in buildings which are not sustainable. In our research project we investigated the living and housing conditions of affected households. The lifestyle of these households can be generally described as very modest - for instance, turning the heating temperature below 20 °C or heating only one room. Consequences are often dampness, mould and health troubles.

While tenants may favour building and dwelling renovation, they are concerned that such improvements will lead to increased rents. Thus, households at risk of energy poverty are often not interested in building renovation, and landlords keep dwelling in unsustainable state of repair, even without a heating system, with the intention to being able to offer cheap dwellings to tenants who cannot afford a higher rent.

In this context, the results of the research project redeEn!, which focuses upon the living and housing conditions of households at risk of energy poverty in two regions in Lower Austria, will be presented.

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