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SNSF-Research Project  
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Three case studies from the German Democratic Republic, Switzerland, and the United States provide the basis for a comparative study of mass housing on the two sides of the Cold War Iron Curtain.

The project's working hypothesis is that the economic constraints of mass housing and the related architectural discourses are more or less the same, irrespective of the specific political system the housing is developed under. These architectural debates are not only related to aesthetics or questions of the generic versus the specific. They touch upon the fundamental question as to whether it is possible to plan and control the future, and whether scientific rigor can be applied to housing design: Can surveys and studies, standards and norms, improve residents' quality of life and shape their behavior? The project aims to produce a comparative, trans-national, and trans-systemic analysis of the relationship between the actors central to housing production, including governmental and non-governmental institutions, architects and planners, residents and scholars. It will study the buildings and discourses of a relatively short period of time, the post-World War II economic boom, and seeks to identify their lasting influence for today. The project seeks to develop methods to link the socio-economic project of mass housing to the writing of architectural history.

Current global developments such as the erosion of Western welfare states, the almost complete withdrawal of the public sector from housing production in post-Socialist countries, and the rapid urbanization of newly industrialized nations are of immediate concern to the research project. The renewed urgency of the housing question enables us to study the policy and design experiments in housing of the post-war period from a new angle, and to reveal connections that have been hard to recognize in recent years.

**The research project comprises three sub-projects:**

A) A Technocrat Beyond the System: The Swiss Architect Hans Schmidt as a Theoretician of Industrialized Construction in the GDR (Kathrin Siebert)

B) Serialized Comfort: The Werkbund's "Fachausschuss Wohnen" and Its "Sonnhalde" Project as Switzerland's Contribution to Mass Housing (Fabian Furter)

C) Twin Parks, The Bronx: Urban Mass Housing in the United States between Modernism and Postmodernism, Welfare State and Deregulation (Susanne Schindler)