

Can tiny houses help solve the affordable housing crisis?

Dr. Mary Dellenbaugh-Losse

20.02.2018

Can tiny houses help solve the affordable housing crisis?

- Why is urban housing so expensive?
How did we get where we are today?
- What are the potential pluses and minuses of tiny houses in the urban housing market?
- What could we learn from tiny housing typologies?

Suburbanization & Reurbanization in the US & Western Europe

Suburbanization & Reurbanization in the US & Western Europe

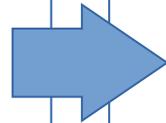
1950s – 1970s

- Single-family housing construction in suburbs
- Increasing per capita floor space
- Construction on greenfields
- New living typologies

Suburbanization & Reurbanization in the US & Western Europe

1950s – 1970s

- Single-family housing construction in suburbs
- Increasing per capita floor space
- Construction on greenfields
- New living typologies



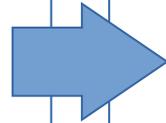
1960s - 1970s

- Urban renewal
- Car-centric urban development
- Large-scale demolition & development

Suburbanization & Reurbanization in the US & Western Europe

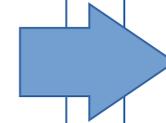
1950s – 1970s

- Single-family housing construction in suburbs
- Increasing per capita floor space
- Construction on greenfields
- New living typologies



1960s - 1970s

- Urban renewal
- Car-centric urban development
- Large-scale demolition & development



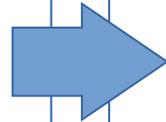
Late 1970s on

- Protests against urban renewal
- “Rediscovery” of urban living
- Loft living & new urban living typologies

Suburbanization & Reurbanization in the US & Western Europe

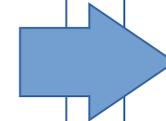
1950s – 1970s

- Single-family housing construction in suburbs
- Increasing per capita floor space
- Construction on greenfields
- New living typologies



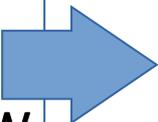
1960s - 1970s

- Urban renewal
- Car-centric urban development
- Large-scale demolition & development



Late 1970s on

- Protests against urban renewal
- “Rediscovery” of urban living
- Loft living & new urban living typologies



Suburbanization & Reurbanization in the US & Western Europe

Since the 1980s

- Entrepreneurial city tactics prioritize investors and middle class in the city center
- Urban living typologies fully accepted and established
- City branding and marketing help to further popularize urban living
- Rising rent prices in major cities lead to urban dwellers reducing floor space to save on housing costs

Rising per capita floor space

+

Increasing land prices in cities

+

(Profit maximization)

=

Rising household housing costs in cities

Rising per capita floor space

+

Increasing land prices in cities

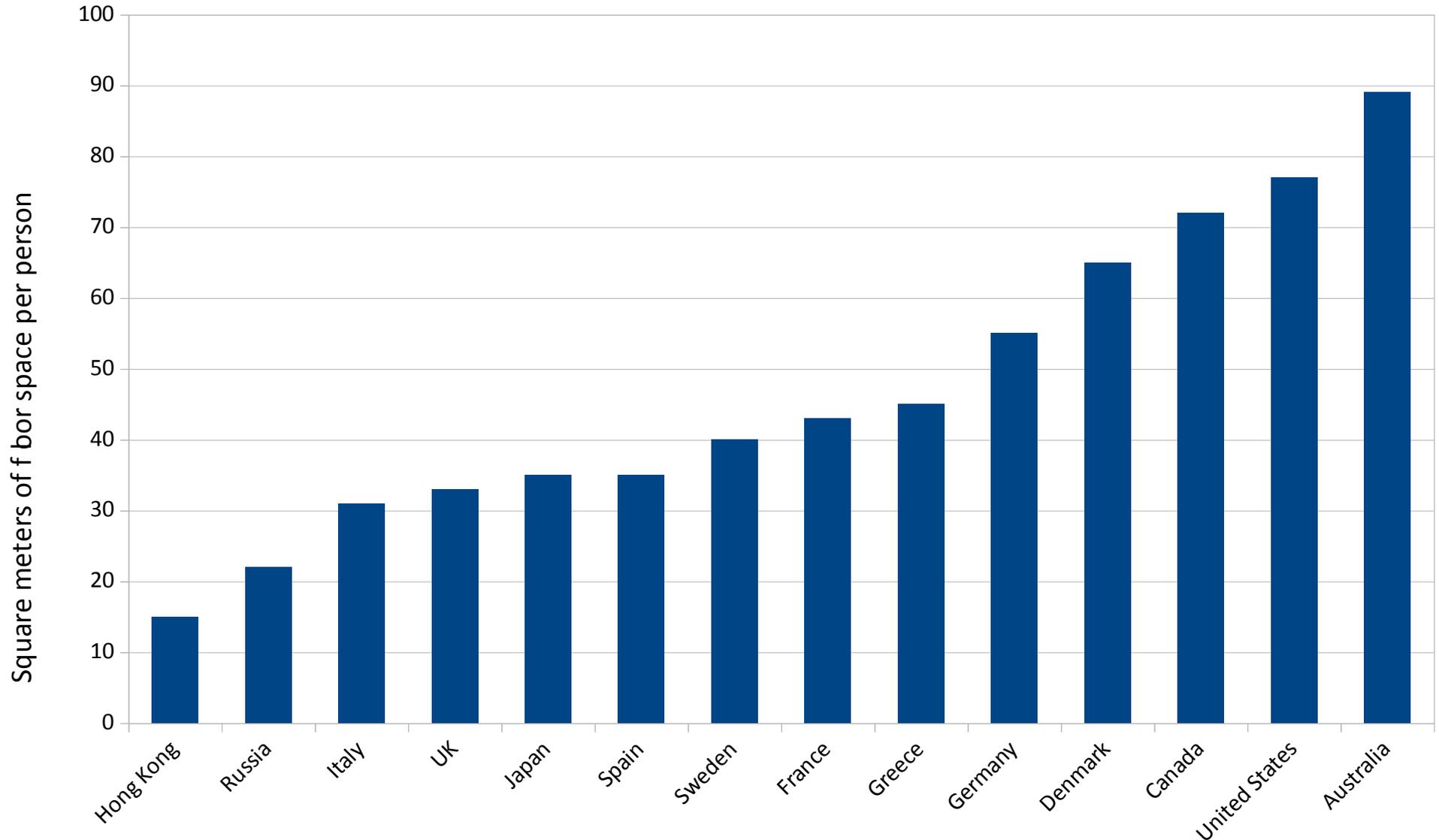
+

(Profit maximization)

=

Rising household housing costs in cities

Average floor space per person in new construction in 2009 (in square meters)



Source: <http://shrinkthatfootprint.com/how-big-is-a-house>

Pluses and minuses of tiny houses
(from an affordability perspective)

The benefits of tiny houses

Construction

- Less materials → reduced overall construction costs (compared to larger dwellings)
- Smaller individual footprint → more dwellings can be constructed on the lot

The benefits of tiny houses

Construction

- Less materials → reduced overall construction costs (compared to larger dwellings)
- Smaller individual footprint → more dwellings can be constructed on the lot

Living

- Lower heating costs compared with larger dwellings
- (Lower rent prices due to reduced floor area)

Negative sides of tiny houses (from an affordability perspective)

- Every tiny house must be individually customized
- “Architecture porn”
- Trendy urban chic
- Luxury segment?

Tiny houses between luxury & affordability?

Luxury

Berlino, 9,7 m² di casa in vendita a 149.000 €

19 gennaio 2018 By [Berlino Magazine](#)



Affordability?

Das 100-Euro-Haus von Le-Mentzel in Berlin

20. Dezember 2016 von [Victoria Scherff](#) Kategorien: [Haushalt & Wohnen](#)

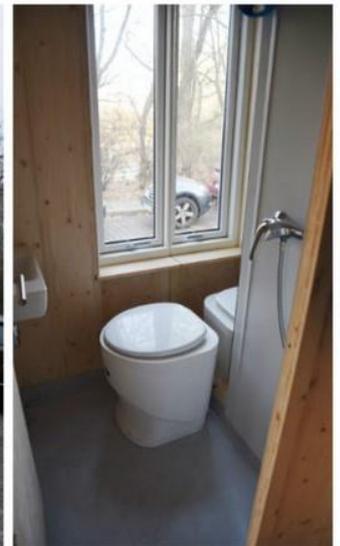


Foto: © TinyU, Utopia/vs

Tiny houses between luxury & affordability?

Luxury

Berlino, 9,7 m² di casa in vendita a 149.000 €

19 gennaio 2018 By Berlino Magazine

To buy: 15,360€/m²



Affordability?

Das 100-Euro-Haus von Le-Mentzel in Berlin

For rent: 15.63€/m²

20. Dezember 2016 von Victoria Scherff Kategorien: Haushalt & Wohnen



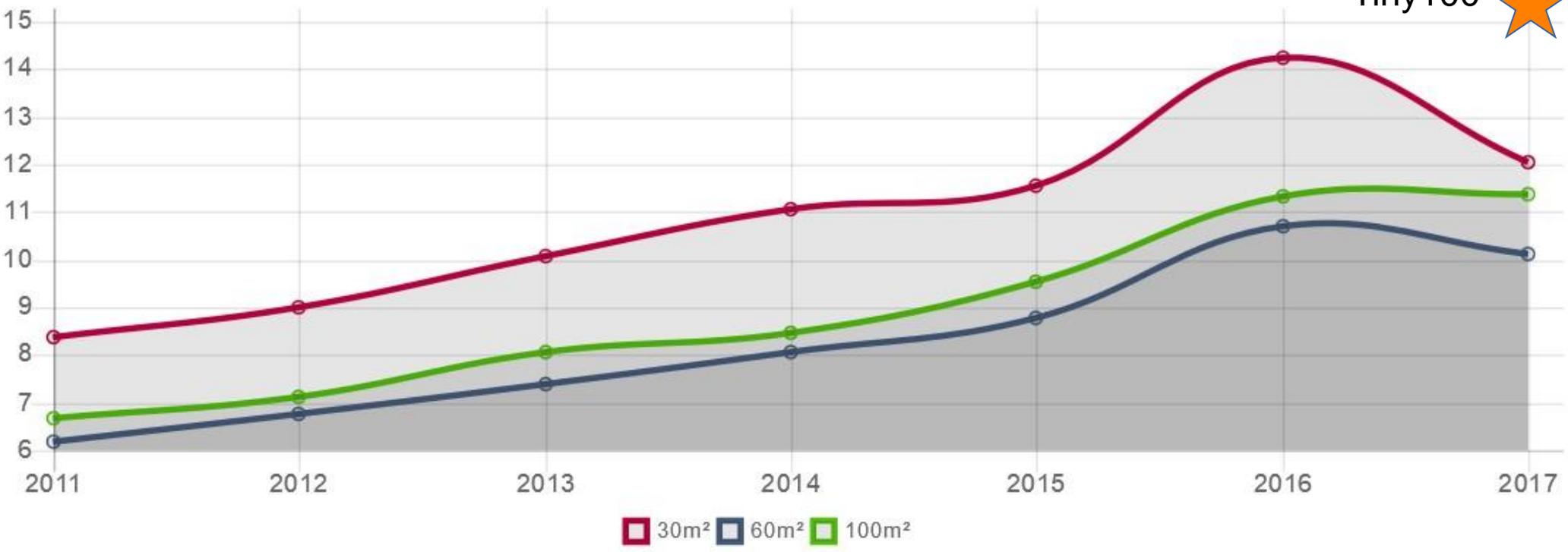
Foto: © TinyU, Utopia/vs

Entwicklung der Mietpreise für Wohnungen in Berlin



Source: <https://www.wohnungsboerse.net/mietspiegel-Berlin/2825>

Entwicklung der Mietpreise für Wohnungen in Berlin



Tiny100 

Source: <https://www.wohnungsboerse.net/mietspiegel-Berlin/2825>

Rising per capita floor space

+

Increasing land prices in cities

+

(Profit maximization)

=

Rising household housing costs in cities

Learning from tiny housing typologies



Created by Freepik

- Reduced floor space > sufficiency
- Space-saving solutions
- Multiple-use rooms/spaces
- Flexible spaces – use can change over the course of the day, the week, or the lifetime of the household
- Modularization

Take-home message

- Tiny houses & tiny apartments can be a good solution for shortages in affordable housing in urban areas, but only if they don't contribute to overall increases in housing prices

Take-home message

- Tiny houses & tiny apartments can be a good solution for shortages in affordable housing in urban areas, but only if they don't contribute to overall increases in housing prices
 - “Be the change you want to see in the market”
 - Look at price per square meter, not (only) overall rent price

Take-home message

- Tiny houses & tiny apartments can be a good solution for shortages in affordable housing in urban areas, but only if they don't contribute to overall increases in housing prices
 - “Be the change you want to see in the market”
 - Look at price per square meter, not (only) overall rent price
- “Normal” housing can learn a lot from tiny housing typologies!
 - Efficient floor plans
 - Flexible rooms & spaces
 - Multiple-uses & fold-aways
 - Modularization

Can tiny houses help solve the affordable housing crisis?

Dr. Mary Dellenbaugh-Losse

20.02.2018

m.dellenbaugh@gmail.com

www.urban-policy.com

<https://www.facebook.com/DrMaryDellenbaugh/>

<https://www.facebook.com/urbanresearchgroup/>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Sources and Further Reading

Tiny houses & affordable housing:

- <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2017/10/why-is-affordable-housing-so-expensive-to-build/543399/>
- <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2017/08/how-luxury-housing-becomes-affordable/535563/>
- <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2017/04/why-is-affordable-housing-so-expensive/523707/>
- <http://cityobservatory.org/downzoning-wont-make-housing-cheaper/>
- <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2017/07/tiny-houses-are-baby-steps-toward-reducing-blight/533736/>
- <https://www.rbb24.de/wirtschaft/beitrag/2018/01/tiny-houses-soziale-wohnidee.html>

Berlin's housing market:

- <https://urban-policy.com/2017/12/05/the-slow-death-of-affordable-housing-a-primer-on-berlins-housing-market-in-three-acts-act-1-housing-in-the-divided-city/>
- <https://urban-policy.com/2017/12/18/the-slow-death-of-affordable-housing-a-primer-on-berlins-housing-market-in-three-acts-act-2-housing-in-the-reunified-city/>
- <https://urban-policy.com/2018/01/02/the-slow-death-of-affordable-housing-a-primer-on-berlins-housing-market-in-three-acts-act-3-the-fate-of-renting-and-owning-today-tomorrow>

Housing policy and urban development:

- <https://urban-policy.com/2018/02/08/the-role-of-diverse-real-estate-markets-in-diverse-cities/>
- <https://urban-policy.com/portfolio/urban-development-through-culture-stadtewandel-durch-kultur-2017/>