Social Housing: How Does it Differ from Affordable Housing, and What is its Relevance in California?

Panelists:
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Joel Rubenzahl, Executive Director Emeritus, Community Economics, Inc.
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Nick Williams, Assistant Asset Manager, San Francisco Community Land Trust
Winning Social Housing in “Red” Vienna

Keith Brower Brown

UC Berkeley, Geography Ph.D. Student
East Bay DSA, Steering Committee & Social Housing Committee
CANADA

FRANCE
JAMAICA

CHILE
BRAZIL
USA
VIENNA, AUSTRIA

Karl-Marx-Hof, built 1930 (1,382 units)
Vienna's Housing Crisis

At end of WWI, tens of thousands of Viennese in outdoor camps.
The Movement That Won Red Vienna (1)

As Vienna industrializes in late 1800s, workers organize.
The Movement That Won Red Vienna (2)

Flag of the Czech/Austrian workers' solidarity group.
The Movement Wins Power!

Social-Democratic Party wins Vienna election and power to tax, 1919
From 1919-1934:
Over 80,000 units of public housing

Red dots:
New public housing buildings

Green dots:
Homeless camps legalized & supported
“Luxury taxes: That's why you vote Social-Democratic”
- Campaign poster
The End of Red Vienna?

Austrian fascists seize power in 1934.
After the war, Vienna kept building public housing.

Today 60% of Vienna lives in housing built, owned, or operated by the municipal government.

Also due to strong rent control, median rents are much lower than comparable EU cities.
Why Did Red Vienna Work?

1. Working people built a mass organization over decades of sustained struggle, committed to universal public programs.
2. With mass action in workplaces, in neighborhoods, and in elections, they held leverage in the economy and won state power.
3. Once they had state power, the movement used it to build beautiful public housing open to all, based off taxing the wealthy.