



# Rationalist Traces

## Eight Urban Villas, Leinefelde-Worbis, Thuringia

Stefan Forster Architekten

2004



New balconies not only enliven the facades, but also enhance living conditions for the tenants.

During the 1960s, Leinefelde developed into one of the main centres for textile production in the former German Democratic Republic. With the expansion of this industry the population grew exponentially (until the reunification of Germany in 1989), requiring the construction of a vast housing estate formed by multistorey blocks made of standardised prefabricated slabs.

After *Die Wende*, Leinefelde suffered the collapse of nearly all its industries, causing high unemployment, a considerable decrease in population, and residential dereliction in the former 'socialist model town'. However, in the mid-1990s Leinefelde was one of the first East German towns to develop a viable plan for deconstructing major parts of its socialist heritage, once again becoming a 'model city'.

Stefan Forster has participated in several projects in the city since 1996. In this, one of his most recent projects, he restructured a 180-metre (590-foot) long prefabricated slab block (built in 1973) by radically reducing its number of apartments. Forster's strikingly simple solution was to decrease the height of the building by one storey, and to create eight freestanding urban villas by dismantling every second staircase in the block. The remaining 64 flats, ranging from 39 square metres (420 square feet) to 84 square metres (904 square feet), were reduced to five basic types, all offering newly daylight kitchens and bathrooms, as well as balconies.

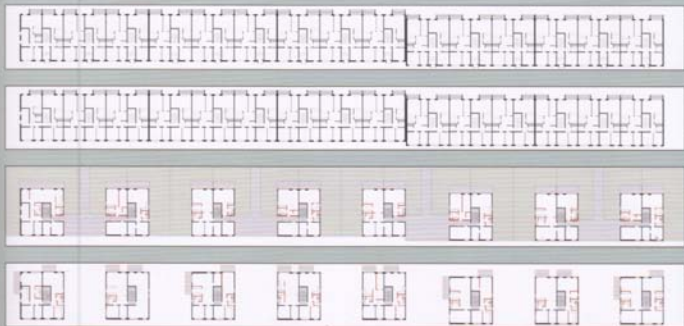
Forster's urban villas represent an unusual proposal for the sustainable enhancement of mass housing in shrinking cities, respecting the urban disposition and the Rationalist vocabulary of the former building.



Even though the number of flats was dramatically reduced, the new urban villas still respect the original urban disposition.



Especially on their eastern side, the new urban villas commemorate the Rationalist vocabulary of the former building.



Ground-floor and standard floor plans before and after restructuring. The restructuring process reduced the number of flats to allow for daylit kitchens and bathrooms.