Housing knowledge/s

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The global housing crisis demands the exchange and inclusion of diverse forms of knowledge in housing studies and design. What do we need to consider?

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Cooperative housing project in Buenos Aires, Argentina (Photo: Judith M. Lehner, 2014)

A global housing crisis cannot be denied. It has been diagnosed and acknowledged by the World Economic Forum[1] as well as the United Nations Habitat *New Urban Agenda*[2], and is once again on political agendas at all levels. Responses to the housing crisis are manifold and often local, while its drivers are complex and globally interconnected. Homeownership through mortgages, 'right-to-buy' policies or micro-financing are globally spreading financialisation mechanisms that convert housing into a commodity – producing displacement for many and accumulation for some. Across the world, housing markets are being shaken by unaffordability at unprecedented speed, and a toxic 'twin boom' in real estate and credit markets, followed by skyrocketing energy prices and construction costs, along with an overwhelming sense of insecurity in the sector. In October 2022, the UBS Global Real Estate Bubble Index[3] bluntly concluded, 'game over'. In November, the Financial Times[4] titled an article 'The global housing market is heading for a brutal downturn' and linked the current turmoil to a global and deepening cost-of-living crisis looming in the background.

Against such overwhelming dynamic, housing research that aims at profoundly informing local responses requires a transdisciplinary understanding of both global and local trends and forces. Especially in regard to the specificity and uniqueness of all 'ordinary cities'[5], bringing together histories, methodologies, and geographical contexts in housing research is one step towards a more globalised dialogue.[6] As a complex research topic, *housing* includes the design of buildings, housing as a form of practice, and housing regimes and policies but, also, an ideological and epistemological component (Madden, in this issue) – especially when it comes to social housing. In this sense, housing research itself needs to be thought of as something contested owing to the multiplicity of housing knowledges (ibid.).

This issue of the future.lab magazine opens up a debate on housing knowledge/s by connecting local cases – such as the City of Vienna (with its well-known Vienna Housing Model), Swiss and Uruguayan housing cooperatives, and the Los Angeles housing and homelessness crisis – with the international debate within housing studies on financialisation, affordability, displacement, distributive justice, and social housing regimes. Rather than a complete account of the current global housing crisis, we would like to ask: what are the forms of knowledge about policy, housing design, and everyday life that need to be considered in housing research and how can we create translations across these specific forms of knowledge? 'Rather than knowledge in the singular, planning is replete with multiple knowledges representing multiple realities. (...) [O]ne needs to ask why is some knowledge privileged over others and who decides what counts as knowledge?'[7] Responding to these questions from the point of view of housing studies, we can observe an ongoing tension between provision and use that has to do with 'top-down, colonial modes of governance and, in bold terms,

An Introduction by Judith M. Lehner
→ Continued on page 2

An Introduction by Judith M. Lehner
→ Continuation from page 1

with deafness and indifference vis-à-vis tenants[8].

For this reason, housing research requires 'a widening of housing's purview and a renewed and open-minded dialogue across scales and positions'[9]. In 2022, during its final presentation year, the International Building Exhibition IBA_Vienna on New Social Housing showed that collaborations and alliances going beyond sectors, disciplines, fields of expertise, and urban boundaries or national borders were required to produce answers and innovative approaches to current and future urban challenges. Moreover, the issue of social housing provision, together with an extended perspective that goes further than narrow definitions of housing regimes as state-driven intervention, needs to be addressed in order to identify the various approaches to housing production and modes of dwelling. With the launch of the Research Center for New Social Housing in the autumn of 2022, a new platform was established at the future.lab of TU Wien. The Research Center, whose name derives from longstanding collaboration with the IBA_Vienna, promotes transdisciplinary, critical, and comparative research in the fields of social housing and urban development. To this end, international summer schools have been held annually since 2018 on relevant aspects of social housing.

The Center, coordinated by Judith M. Lehner, fosters institutional networking between several disciplinary research fields and transdisciplinary collaboration involving both prominent and less vocal actors in Viennese housing production. As a platform, it supports basic critical housing research by early-stage scholars and promotes networking of Viennese housing research and the international visibility, with a wide-ranging view of housing sectors beyond the North-South divide. Taking into account the interactions between architecture, planning, and society, the Center offers space for new ideas at disciplinary intersections, supports experimental housing research using the methods and tools of architecture, planning, and the social sciences, and encourages the broadening of perspectives beyond disciplinary boundaries.

This future.lab magazine edition introduces the Center and its current activities. It is comprised of articles that refer to recent talks, panel discussions, and collaborations of the Research Center for New Social Housing around the topic of housing knowledge/s. The launch of the Center on 13 October 2022 at TU Wien under the title 'Global Housing Crisis – Local Responses?' featured three presentations by renowned scholars, which have been turned into articles for the magazine. At the launch, **Raquel Rolnik**, Professor at the University of São Paulo and former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, talked about the complexities between people and localities (such as commons, cooperatives, or collectives), which are threatened by financialisation. In his presentation, **David Madden**, Associate Professor in Sociology and Co-Director of the Cities Programme at the London School of Economics, explored the 'Politics of Housing Knowledge' and the ways in which housing knowledge shapes our conception of the housing problem. In her presentation, **Sandi Hilal**, co-founder of Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency (DAAR), argued that as regards housing, it is essential to begin rethinking seemingly common notions such as 'public', 'private' and 'hosting'.

The question of how to connect global housing issues with local perspectives and knowledge has also been a central element of the IBA_ResearchLab (a collaboration between the IBA_Vienna, TU Wien, and the University of Vienna, and the predecessor to the Research Center for New Social Housing), where international early-stage researchers could exchange knowledge on housing research and practices. In her article, Amila Širbegović, former project manager within the team of the IBA_Vienna (2016–2022), asks how we want to engage with housing; to this end, she reflects on the IBA_ResearchLab and its international summer schools as a space where one can address various aspects of socially sustainable housing within the context of growing, globalised but, at the same time, increasingly diversified, fragmented cities facing rising social inequalities.

The contributions by Helmi Hisserich, director of international programmes at the Global Policy Leadership Academy in California, and Jennifer Duyne-Barenstein, director of the ETH Wohnforum – ETH CASE at the Department of Architecture at ETH Zurich, deal with the possibility of knowledge transfer and translation of locally specific housing production modes into (culturally) different settings. Helmi Hisserich writes about the challenges of creating an immersive educational programme for policy leaders focused on system change in housing by looking at the Viennese Housing Model and translating it for the Californian context. In her article, which is based on a presentation at the Vienna event 'Mehr als Bauen', at the TU Wien on 27 February 2023, Jennifer Duyne-Barenstein discusses the relevance and replicability of Uruguay's and Switzerland's housing cooperatives' strategies in other Latin American contexts. In the middle section of the magazine, we present some key terms used in housing research to provide orientation to readers and, together with the Research Center for New Social Housing, engage in the further discussion of affordability and social housing, while encouraging strategies against commodification, gentrification, financialisation, and displacement.

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JUDITH M. LEHNER

RESEARCH CENTER FOR NEW SOCIAL HOUSING

The Research Center for New Social Housing was established in the autumn of 2022 as new platform promoting transdisciplinary, critical, and comparative research in the field of housing studies.

The core team of the Research Center consists of Judith M. Lehner (Coordinator of the Center, future.lab, TU Wien), Simon Güntner (Professor of the Research Unit Sociology, TU Wien), Michael Obrist (Professor of the Research Unit Housing and Design, TU Wien), Rudolf Scheuvens (Dean of the Faculty of Architecture and Planning, future.lab, TU Wien), Emma Dowling (Professor at the Institute of Sociology, University of Vienna) and Christoph Reinprecht (Professor at the Institute of Sociology, University of Vienna).

Housing crises in the age of finance

Raquel Rolnik

For a long time, Vienna has been a reference as an example of real implementation of the right to adequate housing as a fundamental human right, as an idea that is not just mumbled words but a reality that has been here, for one hundred years. Unfortunately, the bad news is that in this globalised world, a city cannot exist in a bubble or embark upon a solo career. This is no longer possible. I will try to show why, and the tensions that are already undermining this solid experience, as well as how we can use that story, that strength, not only to resist – thanks to a solid social housing policy – but, also, to show others that it is possible, albeit not in the way it used to be. In order to maintain adequate housing for all as a reality, we will have to change, and the question is in what direction and how.

In order to survive in this world, both in this European world and this globalised world, housing policies, wherever they exist, will have to reinvent themselves, because we are living in times of crisis. This crisis is global and one aspect of it – the environmental crisis – is already absolutely clear to see everywhere, including here. Yet it is not a matter of housing policy or social housing policy, but rather a matter of urban policy as a whole. Even more than urban policy, it is a matter of rethinking the relationship between people and territories, including our relationship with all living beings. This is the kind of challenge we are talking about. But here we need to talk about cities, and the prevalent paradigms which are organizing them.

From the ideal city of 15th century Renaissance to cities and new capitals of modernist states like Brasilia, the design of entire cities and areas has captured the imagination of artists, engineers, and philosophers as counterpoints to the crude realities of actually existing individuals and communities and, at the same time, as a utopian restructuring of the political and spatial economy of everyday life. This could already be seen in Leonardo da Vinci's new plan for Milan after the plague that had ravaged the city, killing nearly one-third of its population, as well as in twentieth-century garden cities, which often portrayed the utopia of a healthy life in the midst of green public spaces as an alternative to filthy, British working-class quarters. From ideal representations to actual regulations, planning has become embedded in operations to rationalise places, living conditions, in an attempt to 'fix' – to fix both in the sense of a remedy but also of binding to a permanent location and a hegemonic socio-political order. Thinking from the periphery of capitalism, we know fairly well what this 'counterpoint' or 'fix' means for what looks like disorder but, in fact, is a different way of organising lives and territories: violent dispossessions.

Housing or residential neighbourhoods have performed a crucial role in place-making, especially by designating not only actual locations, but also implying socio-political relations. We must remember that in Leonardo da Vinci's ideal city, there were two separate, parallel levels: one for the gentry and one for the rest. Similarly, in the modernist dream of Brasilia, workers would live in satellite towns rather than in the masterplan.

No utopia has spoken out so clearly the nature of the links between territories and political conditions than 18th century liberal ideas, in which property rights and citizenship became deeply intertwined. The imaginary of the 18th century could never have expected the dystopia of neoliberalism, 250 years after the birth of the utopia of property as freedom. Now we find ourselves in a phase of capitalism in which the electronic command of financial capital has led to a global tenure insecurity crisis.

Today, we are witnessing a global tenure insecurity crisis, in which ties between individuals and territories are becoming weaker and built space is being converted into a fictitious commodity – a liquid asset. We observe the hegemony of the private homeownership model as the one and only model, together with a dismantling of concrete connections between built space and people. Indeed, today built space is only a passage for financial capital – thus it does not matter whether somebody is living in it or not. This is no longer important because built space has become a fundamental asset in financial capital circuits. This surplus of capital is circulating in the financial realm, floating over the world to see where it can land in order to appreciate rapidly and grow larger, to land, to appreciate, with no end or purpose other than to increase through compounding.

Fed by pension funds (which we workers are part of), private equity, hedge funds, and other financial agents and products (which are often globalised), housing represented one of the most dynamic new frontiers of late neoliberalism during the decades of economic boom. At the outset of the mortgage financial crisis, housing was again converted into one of the main Keynesian strategies to recover from the crisis. We are talking about several processes that are occurring simultaneously. Changes in the political economy of work, such as the working-class city, industrial workers with salaries etc., have just come to an end. We are simultaneously leaving a process of self-exploitation– the so-called 'uberisation' of work– in which flexibility is the norm. We are also observing a changing role of the state, which is visible in every local dismantling of the welfare state, which is taking place everywhere, sometimes in a very subtle way. Social demands (including housing) are increasingly tied to financial capital (we are talking about financialising social rights) combined with the central role of real estate in the financial circuit (as built space and real estate are the perfect collateral for finance). As our grandmothers always told us, 'invest your money into real estate because it never disappears, it's solid, it lasts over time, it won't vanish in the air.' Of course, when you go to the bank and apply for a loan, the question the bank manager will ask is: 'Do you have an apartment or a piece of land as collateral?' But now we have trillions of financial capitals with hunger for collateral floating over the world investing in rent seeking landscapes, housing included.

We have entered a new phase of capitalism, where high-frequency trading, which combines digital and electronic means (with spatial payroll compression and sophisticated algorithms by which capital is mobilised and accumulated), is betting on expectation of future value. The best example of this new form of assembly line, which disassembles and re-

Raquel Rolnik at the launch of the Research Center (Photo: Stefan Zamisch, IBA Wien, 2022)

connects capital concentrated in the ever fewer hands of powerful corporations and deterritorialised investment funds, is provided by Airbnb. This is an investment fund making trillions of dollars on the stock exchange by extracting value from our bodies, our work, and the places we live in.

Housing has shifted from the realm of social policy to becoming an important vehicle of accumulation. There are many examples of how this has been done in various places and in different ways. For those who still believe in the idea that the market will provide adequate housing for all, and no state intervention is needed, the bad news is that this is totally untrue. As a matter of fact, we are amidst one of the worst housing crisis in some European cities. The financialisation of housing could not have happened without the creation of specific instruments and the material, symbolic, and normative conditions for financial capital to plunge individuals and families into indebtedness, with the idea of transferring debt from states to individuals and families.

After 2008 (i.e. after the mortgage and financial crisis) we are now experiencing a new wave of financialisation: through rental housing. This combines several elements, such as new 'automated landlords' (like Airbnb), corporate landlords like Blackstone who own thousands of rental apartments and, also, high-end property as a safety deposit box for accumulated wealth. We are not only talking about these forms, but also about the importance of the state as a normative force and its leading role in introducing them.

Once more, as in the previous phase of rental housing, the result is dispossession, displacement, a housing crisis and, in some cases, housing emergencies. This is clearly what is going on in São Paolo (Brazil), for example. In São Paolo, 50 thousand people are living on the street, something never seen before. At the same time, the city is experiencing one of the strongest construction booms. Hundreds of thousands of new residential units are being built yet stay empty; whole buildings are erected for investment purposes rather than for those who need a place to live. Both phenomena are happening at the same time in this city.

Indeed, it has always been very interesting to look at the periphery of capitalism. This is where a specific phenomenon, or a specific paradigm, is played out in a much wilder, much more acute, much more exclusionary way. Yet it is the same global phenomenon and the same global paradigm. For instance, the model of European social housing, translated into social policies in Latin America, has literally created 'housing plantations': miles and miles of housing only complexes on the city's outskirts without any access to real urban life.

Globally, housing crises are more acute for ethnic, non-white, poor, vulnerable, or young people. For we are not talking about a general housing emergency. In some cases, and I bet that this is the case in Vienna, some groups are suffering more than others, whilst other groups are safer and better off. Maybe newcomers are less fortunate at gaining access. Once more, within the financial logic, bets and strategies ensure that revenues from invested capital will increase by ignoring people's needs. Nobody talks about needs anymore: the very notion is completely absent from the planning discourse. Planning offers perks everywhere on the scene in order to open up new frontiers for investment capital to restructure cities and earn more money and interest.

However, this situation is also generating, and this is very important, a new movement of resistance. In many cities a new tenant movement is emerging, that had not existed before or almost died out between the beginning and the middle of the 20th century. This is happening even in countries where this phenomenon was not visible anymore. Again, if we look at the central role of the state in generating new incentives for corporate landlords, or the role of international corporation agencies in promoting rental housing policies, and coming up with these policy models: all of them are underpinned by this common economic paradigm of financial capital.

In order not to conclude with a very dystopian perspective, let me ask: what can mere mortals do against abstract deterritorialised fluxes of financial capital? Firstly, we should realise that the model proposed by neoliberalists, namely, that everybody would achieve homeownership and that would be fantastic for all in the short or long run, was a falsehood. Secondly, neoliberalism is not at all able to put forward any responses to the many crises that we are living in: housing emergencies, environmental crisis, or political crisis. So how should we respond?

I would take up the idea of viewing land and housing in a completely de-mercantilised way. So what is the most secure way of linking up people with their localities? It is not homeownership, it is not private property. Indeed, it is quite the opposite, because private property can change hands very quickly and provides the perfect logic for financial capital to move in and out.

What kinds of bond between people and places might block financial capital? A number of complex ties relating people with localities may be named, such as commons, cooperatives, or collectives, which mix ownership and forms of tenure. It is time to reimagine tenure forms together with new forms of living. We are not living in the same way as we did in the 20th century, when the urban social housing model was set up. Rethinking housing — not as four walls and a roof, not as a machinery to produce and reproduce financial capital — is crucial. All the efforts to stop the Right to Buy, to stop the privatisation of social housing, to rethink how we can organise space collectively in a very diverse and complex way, are a fundamental stand against the complete colonisation of localities by financial capital. They drive the idea that we should build up and maintain our ties with territories in order to promote and protect life.

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RAQUEL ROLNIK

The Politics of Housing Knowledge

David Madden

The launch event for the Research Center for New Social Housing asked: what are the necessary forms of knowledge in housing design, policy, and everyday life that need to be considered in housing research? Responding very literally to this question, I will discuss the sociology of housing knowledge. By 'housing knowledge', I don't just mean housing research, although research is certainly a part of it. Rather, housing knowledge is broader than that, and it is not restricted to academic settings. It exists out in the world, as part of the housing system.

We can define housing knowledge very broadly as the set of ideas, imaginaries, facts and theories about the housing system and how people dwell. This is clearly a huge topic. Here I want to offer a few thoughts more specifically on the politics of housing knowledge. First, I would like to argue that housing knowledge is constitutively political. Housing knowledge is not merely a reflection of the housing system, but a part of it. Therefore, it is inherently contested, inherently bound up in struggles over housing and in struggles over the larger shape of our politics and our economy. Second, I would like to argue that social housing, specifically the social project, the political project of social housing, has always included a strong epistemic component. We can understand the history of social housing through a succession of different housing knowledges that were drafted in the

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service of these different phases of social housing projects in different places. Finally, I will argue that social housing today requires a critical reinvention of housing knowledge and that the development of critical knowledge about housing and everyday life is needed. Both critical housing studies and radical housing politics need a theory of housing knowledge that will help us contest housing politics in this financialised age.

KNOWLEDGE AND IDEOLOGY IN HOUSING

When we talk about the housing system, it is not only about buildings, tenure categories or housing policies: there is also an important ideological and epistemological component to it. Researchers obviously produce and consume knowledge about housing all the time, in housing reports, studies, plans, or promotional materials. However, their tendency is to see this as one step removed from housing politics and as one step removed from the housing system—as a reflection or record of the housing system rather than as a part of the residential process itself. Yet if we look more closely, it becomes obvious that the production of knowledge about housing is everywhere in the housing system.

Tenants produce knowledge about housing. Public housing authorities produce their own, different knowledge about housing. Real estate capital produces knowledge about public and private housing. Many other groups and institutions have a stake in knowing the housing system as well. These forms of knowledge undoubtedly have many overlaps and connections, but they are not identical, and often contradict each other. There are clashing bodies of knowledge about housing that reflect the inequalities and conflicts within and beyond the housing system.

Housing knowledge is arguably a core part of the housing system. Housing authorities constantly produce their own housing knowledge, and there are real concrete effects stemming from the decisions they make about what they measure, what they ignore, or whom they listen to. Housing knowledge is not only a matter of empirical facts; there are also ideological images that have shaped both the way we dwell and the way we think about how we dwell. The inherent supremacy of owner occupation and private property, for example, is an ideological form of housing knowledge.

Our everyday images about what is desirable about housing, about the correct way to dwell, about how and why we should value housing — these are all shaped by this field of images, facts, and ideas, which is not autonomous but reflective of concrete social power. In some cases, epistemic conflicts about the housing system involving highly technical forms of knowledge are the direct form in which housing struggles are proceed. One example is the institution of viability assessments in British planning, where developers argue with local authorities whether or not it is economically viable for a private housing development to include non-market components, in line with local policy. In these instances, debates about knowledge represent material interests in a very direct way. What counts in terms of relevant empirical data and working assumptions shapes the residential landscape directly.

Housing researchers have engaged with the question of housing knowledge in various ways. Jim Kemeny wrote a number of papers in the 1980s, arguing that 'the social organisation of housing research fundamentally moulds the way in which it is carried out and therefore filters and sensors the way in which housing problems are formulated and analysed."[1] In my opinion, struggles over the politics of problem definition in housing can be seen all the time. In the United Kingdom, for instance, no one denies that there is a housing problem. But people debate this

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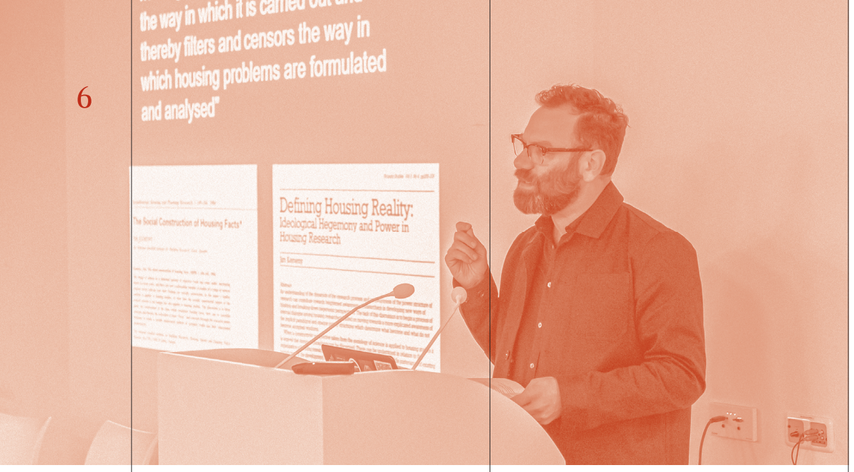
issue and formulate it in different ways. Some politicians, as well as property developers, prefer to understand the housing problem as one of houses that need to be regenerated or as the monetary costs of council housing; whereas housing activists and tenant campaigners see it through a different lens, focussed on questions of stability, affordability, and the kinds of domestic and community life that housing can support.

But the politics of housing knowledge is not only a matter of epistemic struggles and problem definition. Kemeny goes further, saying that our basic concepts in housing research, such as 'household'



David Madden at the launch of the Research Center (Photo: Stefan Zamisch, IBA Wien, 2022)

or 'dwelling', are themselves synthetic and, to some extent, artefacts of different research methods. Different agencies understand them differently. They are defined and mobilised in different ways.

Kemeny argues that the very conceptual roots of housing research are to some extent indeterminate from the ground up, and there is politics to this as well. Imagining households as the relevant unit for housing policy builds in an individualistic conception into the field of politics. What would happen if we saw communities, collectives, or social classes as the relevant unit for housing knowledge? For example, there is a debate amongst housing researchers about how to measure urban residential displacement. Many take households as their relevant unit, and argue that at the household level, there is no evidence of displacement. But if you look at the communal or collective level, and if you define displacement not as direct displacement of households but as something inherently tied to classes and racialised groups, then the picture looks very different and the evidence for displacement is clear.

So I am suggesting that housing researchers should think about housing knowledge itself as an object of analysis, to see it as something that is contested and partly constitutive of housing politics, because this contestedness, the multiplicity of unequal housing knowledges, is central to the whole phenomenon. This is the case for many different housing tenures and forms. Let's think for a second about one specific group of tenures: the role of knowledge in the project of social housing.

HOUSING KNOWLEDGE AND THE PROJECT OF SOCIAL HOUSING

Social housing has always had an epistemic component. Knowing how people dwell, knowing poverty and inequality, knowing 'healthier,' 'better' or more 'modern' way to live – these have always been central to social housing in its various forms. In New York and London, for instance, social housing is rooted in philanthropic housing, which started in the late 19th century. In London, philanthropic housing was animated by a very distinct form of housing knowledge connected to social reformers and the social survey movement. Highly moralised, it treated poverty as a spectacle of depravity. In New York a very similar spectacle of poverty was used in order to make the case for highly paternalistic and privately controlled social housing. As the two cities moved towards municipally owned public housing, they drew on this earlier housing knowledge and altered it in order to make it more politically relevant, connecting it to a reformed set of theories about the housing system. But even as it mixed with other residential epistemologies, traces of this moralised, hierarchy-affirming 19th century housing knowledge persisted in later eras of social housing.

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A strong propagandistic component was involved in the project of social housing. The dominant form of housing knowledge during the second half of the 20th century in social housing and public housing, both in London and New York, was technocratic managerial knowledge. The perspectives of tenants were registered in various ways, but housing authorities put a strong emphasis on technical expertise. This kind of technocratic expertise animated housing politics into the 1970s and 1980s. In the 1980s and 1990s, housing authorities started creating neoliberal housing knowledges. This also drew on technical expertise, but rather than being produced by the state, it often stemmed from consultants who were connected to different circuits of global capital. This is the latest chapter in this process of privileging technocratic forms of expertise that are quite separate from tenants' perspectives or from lived realities in these communities.

Obviously, there has always been alternative housing knowledges – forms of knowing the housing system and social housing – created by tenant activists, community campaigners, and other critical political actors. From the beginning of public housing in London and New York, this type of housing knowledge has always taken a dual position: criticising the project of social housing whilst upholding it and trying to promote its broad goals in a much more substantive way. These tend to be forms of housing knowledge that are, in some way, outsider knowledges drawing on the experiences of marginalised groups living in public housing: racialised groups, women, or queer tenants and households, but can also be seen as the ultimate insider position – the position of someone living in social housing who is trying to articulate an immanent critique. It is this immanent critique that we should try to look for when we are trying to define what a critical social housing knowledge could be.

TOWARDS CRITICAL HOUSING KNOWLEDGE

It is crucial to consider the sorts of knowledge that are necessary for new social housing: what should count, what housing authorities should look at, how tenants should gather information on their public landlords and the authorities that organise our housing, etc. There is something undeniably exciting about the interface between critical housing researchers and the radical housing movements who are redefining the housing problem. A lot of this critical knowledge involves detailed empirical work, for example mapping patterns of ownership, tracking evictions, or monitoring changes in rent levels. The ongoing generation of empirical knowledge that is useful for housing movements and advocates is a crucial part of contemporary housing politics and is necessary if there is to be a new era of social housing.

Housing knowledge today also needs to engage with critical concepts in order to make sense of the contemporary housing crisis. Most people involved in housing will be familiar with terms such as financialisation, rentierization, commodification, inclusion, indirect displacement, and residential alienation. These are all complex terms that are used to diagnose and contextualise the housing problem. Some of these terms might appear to be

Photo: Judith M. Lehner, 2023

purely academic concepts heard in academic settings, but if you spend time with housing activists and housing campaigners, you'll hear them using concepts like this all the time, as well as inventing new ones – in other words, being housing theorists as well as housing activists. This is a form of critical knowledge that researchers need to take seriously.

There needs to be a reflexivity about who produces what is considered legitimate knowledge about the housing system, and social housing in particular. In the cities that I study, there is a lot of talk about tenant participation, but when it comes to decision-making, the perspectives of tenants are nowhere to be found. Any critical housing knowledge needs to be reflexive, to ask whose perspective is being reproduced within it, and to problematise the notion of expertise. I don't necessarily think we should try to get rid of the idea of expertise, but we absolutely must problematise it, democratise it, and recognise the expertise that tenants have about their own dwelling conditions. A critical housing knowledge needs to speak to what Neil Brenner calls 'the disjunction between the actual and the possible'.[2] There is a difference between the potential for social housing and its form of appearance, and critical housing knowledge needs to attend to this. The immanent critique of social housing that comes from housing movements, advocates and tenants challenges the housing system to live up to the goals that it simultaneously proclaims and forecloses. There is a huge political difference between that and the system-conserving criticism of social housing that tries to prove that social housing is a failure and was always bound to fail.

A genuinely critical housing knowledge will engage with the system-challenging immanent critique while opposing the system-conserving forms of knowledge that criticise social housing in order to privatise and abolish it. In the United States and the United Kingdom, mainstream social housing knowledge tends to focus solely on the form of appearance, and that is one of the sources of the ideological consensus about the social failure of social housing. Critical housing knowledge subverts this idea by identifying the social practices, forms of power, and economic factors that are responsible for this situation, while keeping faith with the potential for a social transformation of the housing system that social housing represents. Transformative knowledge about housing and urban life never loses sight of the difference between the actual and the possible, and the option to struggle both within and against the state, and therefore both within and against the social housing system, in order to better live up to the ideal of social housing and the right to the city. An analysis of housing knowledge matters, because the knowledge that social housing draws upon does helps produce social housing as a political practice.

> Any critical housing knowledge needs to be reflexive, to ask whose perspective is being reproduced within it, and to problematise the notion of expertise.

Researchers are far from the only producers and consumers of housing knowledge, but we do occupy a strategic position in relation to it. Scholars are indeed part of the project of social housing as well as observers of it, because social housing or public housing has always relied upon academic housing knowledge, among other sources. In response to the intensification of the global housing crisis, voices in Vienna and many other cities are calling for a new era of social housing and a new wave of radical municipalism. Bringing about this new era of municipal politics will require new critical housing knowledge and practice that can help us diagnose the crisis and imagine alternatives.

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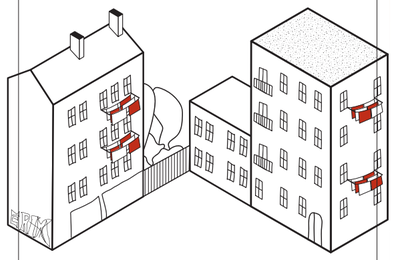
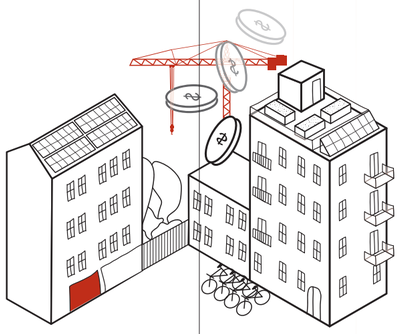
Glossary of Housing Studies

Nina Lobnig

This glossary explains key terms that are relevant for understanding complex issues around urban development and the ongoing transformation of (social) housing, encouraging readers to critically examine them. Although the glossary presents terms that are widely known within academia, it aims to convey concepts and approaches, as well as their relationships, and the consequences they might entail, to readers without any specific housing knowledge. In this way, current dynamics and developments in cities and housing markets around the world, including in Vienna, will become clearer.





AFFORDABILITY

[/əˌfɔːdəˈbɪlətɪ/. The extent to which a good is affordable, as measured by its cost relative to the amount the buyer is able to pay]

Affordability may be viewed as the central component of the right to adequate housing. The term refers to renting housing of a given standard at a reasonable cost in relation to a household's income (i.e. without placing an excessive burden on it). What is considered 'reasonable' in the context of housing affordability is usually determined by the authorities or third parties, not by the affected tenants (Maclennan et al. 1990, 9). The notion of affordability underlies different understandings and methods of measurement, with the most commonly used being rent-to-income ratio and residual income (Chaplin et al. 1999, 1949). These metrics have received criticism, since they come with a variety of shortcomings, such as: not taking regional variations in housing costs into account; not distinguishing between households with very different income levels; and not bearing a relationship to the 'fundamental definition' of affordability (Chaplin et al. 1999, 1950).

Vienna is often considered to be a city with an affordable rental housing market, thanks to its long-lasting tradition of social and non-profit housing. On average, 26% of a Viennese household's income is spent on monthly rent (Statistik Austria 2021). For housing to be affordable, in addition to not exceeding a given percentage of one's monthly income, a variety of (other) factors, which are very often individual, must be taken into account, as well as the cost of living (including energy), and salary trends. Being able to afford something does not mean that something is affordable.

COMMODIFICATION

[/kəˌmɒdɪfɪˈkeɪʃn/. The assignment of a commercial value to something previously valueless.]

Commodification describes the process by which the economic value of a commodity dominates its other uses. The commodification of housing means that a building's function as a valuable real estate object outweighs its actual use as living space. Thus, in this process housing as a real estate investment plays a much more important role than all other claims, be they the ethical or emotional value of the home, legal rights, cultural habits, or tradition (Madden et al. 2016, 14). Commodification is not a natural state that housing spontaneously assumes; rather, state action is required for dwellings to become a commodity. The consequences of this are uneven, since the wealthier population group derives a profit from the material value of real estate, whilst the less fortunate group, who seek housing as a place to live, encounter instability and conflict (Madden et al. 2016, 29).

Today, in times of growing inequalities caused by the increasingly important role of housing as an instrument for financial accumulation, 'hyper-commodification' can be witnessed at the global level, under which not only housing is being primarily turned into a commodity but, also, all its material and legal structures and functions, such as land, labour, and property rights (Madden et al. 2016, 18).

In Vienna, the large de-commodified housing stock, whose related policies and strategies date back to the 1920s – rooted in the 'Red Vienna' era – has until now played an important role in the provision of affordable housing and in blocking access to it by market forces (Kadi 2015).

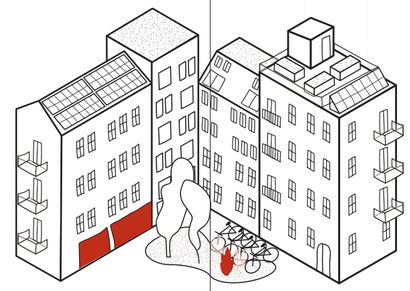
FINANCIALISATION

[fɪˌnænʃəlaɪˈzeɪʃən. The act of making, or treating as, financial; bringing something into the sphere of finance]

Housing has become a lucrative financial asset and a popular way to generate and accumulate wealth. This is for several reasons as regards the financial market, such as increasing instability and low interest rates. A variety of strategies are being applied by institutional investors but also by individual households, turning dwellings into a financial commodity, or liquid asset. This change, from housing providing a place to live to being a profitable investment, can be explained within the framework of financialisation, which implies the growing dominance of financial actors, practices, and markets (Musil et al. 2022).

The transformation of the housing and real estate market by the (global) capital market, along with financial excess, can be witnessed on a global scale. This is referred to as the financialisation of housing, which occurs when dwellings are no longer viewed as a social good, a place to live in but, much rather, as a financial commodity and a vehicle for the accumulation of wealth (Farha 2017).

Housing research distinguishes between three different types of practice and process, which can be subsumed under the term 'financialisation', namely: globalisation dynamics, which shape the economic and political framework needed for financialisation to take place; the ideological narrative of neoliberalism; and commodification and marketisation as the concrete strategies and practices through which the financialisation of housing manifests itself (Jacobs et al. 2020).



GENTRIFICATION

[/ˌdʒentrɪfɪˈkeɪʃn/. The process of improving an urban area so that it attracts people of a higher social class]

The term gentrification – introduced in the 1960s by British sociologist Ruth Glass, who observed changes in the housing market and residential composition of working class quarters in London (Ruth Glass 1964) – applies to a process of change in the appearance of a neighbourhood, whereby financial (re)investment, accompanied by the arrival of higher-income population groups (the 'gentry'), ultimately leads to the displacement of socio-economically vulnerable or undesired groups from urban areas to the outskirts. Gentrification is the visible spatial representation of changes occurring on a large societal scale and a driving force of social inequalities in urban neighbourhoods (Kadi et al. 2019, 7).

The urban areas most likely to undergo gentrification are those that offer opportunities for profitable redevelopment and regeneration as a result of prior disinvestment in the urban infrastructure, and in which the interests of residents who face work instability, unemployment or stigmatization are compromised by the business and policy needs of the elite (Slater 2011, 572). Furthermore, changes in the housing and labour markets, coupled with the material and discursive upgrading of public spaces have led to a shift in the framework conditions of urban development, making gentrification an increasingly relevant aspect of urban transformation in cities around the world (Kadi et al. 2019) or, as Neil Smith describes it: 'a back to the city movement, but rather of capital than of people' (Neil Smith 1979)

DISPLACEMENT

[/dɪsˈpleɪsmənt/. The act of forcing somebody or something away from their home or position]

The complex phenomenon of residential displacement, often caused by gentrification, can be differentiated into various types 'Direct displacement' refers to households being forced to leave owing to increased rent or to physical threats by the property-owner wanting to improve the dwelling and/or increase the rent level. A second form, 'displacement by exclusion', occurs when rents are raised after a lease expires, making it impossible for new households with a similar socio-economic background to move to certain neighbourhoods. Social, cultural or economic changes in neighbourhoods, such as a change in residential composition, can be held accountable for the third form: 'displacement pressure'. Contrary to the two forced forms of displacement, which are closely tied to changes in the rental housing market, residents decide to leave the neighbourhood, in the widest sense, voluntarily (Marcuse 1985).

In order to prevent residential displacement, segregation, and gentrification during housing rehabilitation, the City of Vienna has implemented a 'soft urban renewal' approach since the 1970s. Here, 'soft' refers to the preference for neither demolishing historical buildings nor creating entire new urban areas all at once (thus forcing residents to rehouse and causing displacement) but, rather, involving tenants in the regeneration process. The aim is to improve their living conditions, maintain rent affordability, and increase the attractiveness of neighbourhoods, thereby fostering a socially mixed population (Housing 2030).

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Private Sphere, Public Sphere and Hospitality

Sandi Hilal

The practice that Alessandro Petti and I founded is called DAAR. In English, this means 'Decolonizing Architecture Art', with the 'R' sometimes meaning Residency, sometimes Research – DAAR in Arabic means 'house'. Twenty years ago, when we returned to Palestine after studying architecture in Italy, we decided to establish a practice that would deal with decolonisation. Today, it seems that speaking about decolonisation is something open and easy and happens everywhere. Yet twenty years ago, even in a place like Palestine, it was quite hard to address the topic of decolonisation. Therefore, when we were unable to be part of the public or to find a space to speak in public, our house became the only place where it would be possible to do so. At the beginning, most of our practice was conducted inside domestic spaces because these were the places where we were able to express ourselves. In that sense, when we discuss knowledge about housing, I think it is extremely important to review certain conceptions and then rethink them.

THE PUBLIC SPHERE

I studied architecture and consider that we think about the private and public spheres in a very abstract way. Let me explain this briefly. I will address three notions: the public sphere, the private sphere, and hospitality, and explain why problematising, redefining, and rethinking these three conceptions, as well as certain designs, is important. This live in an era during which we can still change,

> In my opinion, studying architecture is about looking around us, observing what is happening and trying to analyse it.

and students can be taught in a new way in order to produce knowledge differently. I studied architecture in Venice where, we were taught that we would be better architects (in a moral sense), if we designed for the public and that we would be a little bit more of a failure if we designed our cousins' houses. This was implied in the way we studied architecture. In Venice, the vocation was to design for the public, because this is where we could change the world – this is where we would become better architects.

Let us now go back to Palestine. Our first project involved Israeli settlements on the West Bank, which are illegal under the United Nations, and tried to find a way to subvert the use of the Israeli settlement to become places to be used by Palestinians. The first thing that we began to explore was land ownership. Before the Israeli occupation moved into Palestine, local residents were still using Ottoman laws, in particular as regards land ownership. There were different forms of belonging to a collective and amongst them was a legal category called 'Al-Masha'. Here, people would merge large pieces of land and, especially around larger villages, begin to plant trees outside the village. People helped each other and the land ownership was shared amongst many people.

It was a sort of collectivity that was neither managed by the state nor private. When Israel, as a state, arrived with their maps and placed them on top of the existing territory, they called all kinds of collectivity 'public'. Public meant the state, the state was Israel, and in this way the Palestinian collectivity was expropriated. At this point, I began to learn how, why, and when to distrust the notion of public.

THE PRIVATE SPHERE

In the private sphere, it is quite interesting to observe that land ownership plays a very important role for indigenous communities. In my opinion, studying architecture is about looking around us, observing what is happening and trying to analyse it. The example nearest to me is my grandmother: she worked for 24 years to buy a tiny piece of land – 600 m². There, today, 60 members of the family are still living. She created this home and then my father, my uncle, my uncle's sons and daughters, my brother, my cousins, etc. also settled there. This home is not for sale, because it would be impossible to sell. What my grandmother did was to actually put down roots. She took herself and her offspring to a place that for me became a sort of social housing. My grandmother is a woman who wished to raise her children somewhere. For her, it was like an indigenous struggle, declaring that this was where she would stay and use private property as a way to protect herself and the children. As Israelis expropriate what Palestinians own in common, I am of the opinion that calling what my grandmother owns a 'private property' is to expropriate what she managed to achieve in terms of becoming rooted in the land and in terms of indigenous struggle.

> Conversely, how can we begin to think about the 'private' sphere in a new way?

The question is, how can we name things differently, think differently, and teach our students in a different way? How can we use that knowledge in a way that does not flatten it?

Here is briefly another example. There is a large farm in the middle of Jaffa, Tel Aviv (Israel), that is still Palestinian, where around 300 people are living. This is because in 1948 a grandfather decided not to divide the huge piece of land that he owned. At that time, he thought that if he divided it amongst his grandsons, and one of them would ever consider selling his plot, the land would be completely lost forever. Therefore, he prepared the deed in the surname of his family and now it is the only piece of land still surviving in the middle of Jaffa. This is thanks to private property. Yet the question is how private property was used. Sometimes private property is an instrument of neoliberalism, but at other times the same legal categories or the public authorities are used against us when we seek to build our own collectivities.

How are these categories applied and how might we use them to resist? How can it be that we employ the same name for what my grandmother achieved as for the many privately owned buildings of some rich man in Manhattan that are being managed by somebody else? Is this acceptable? In architecture, we do not teach our students how to begin to think about the 'public' sphere in a different way. Conversely, how can we begin to think about the 'private' sphere in a new way? More generally, how might we rethink how these two categories are used? This is not a black-and-white issue. We cannot claim that public is good and private is bad – or the other way around. What is it that we are investing in? What kind of struggle are we conducting? This, for me, constitutes a major question.

The Living Room Project, Boden, Sweden, 2019 (Photo: Andreas Fernandez, 2019)

HOSPITALITY

These conceptions of the 'private' and 'public' spheres are what we, as DAAR, carried with us from Palestine when we moved to Sweden. For me, this was a move to the white 'First World', where social housing is available and the claim for the right of all citizens to housing. I arrived in Sweden, and I was commissioned to do a public art project by the Swedish public arts agency. At that time, however, I was somewhat struggling with one thing – a fear that I carried within me – that I then turned into one of my main projects in Sweden. I had lived in Italy for thirteen years; when I arrived there as a student, the promise for me was that if I behaved well, if I learned how to speak Italian properly, if I actually assimilate into the Italian version of the public realm, then the promise was that I would become Italian; I would become one of them. Yet with all my efforts I never became Italian because I'm still somehow Palestinian too.

Hence when I moved to Sweden, I thought: if I had behaved in the right way for thirteen years of my life and never became Italian after all, then I had zero chances in Sweden. Somehow, I took this feeling to Sweden as my main struggle and tried to understand the reason why I was not even willing to try to integrate again. I tried to understand why I distrust integration the way it is proposed to me. In my opinion, this is where hospitality comes in. This is also where bringing hospitality into the private-public debate becomes crucial, because what I understood is that the integration contract was about keeping me as a guest forever and keeping the state institutions as host forever. My project was thus about what I call the right to be a host. Why is it always important in both, in the private and in the public sphere, to ask the question of who is the host? Do we mean by 'public' that the host is always the government, or is it possible to conceive that there might be other forms? In that sense, who is hosting whom is becoming an extremely important issue.

> Maybe it is the role of universities, research centres, etc. to actually think about why we are not ready to redefi ne diverse forms of private and public spheres?

As regards housing, this is where it is essential to begin thinking about redefining different kinds of bubbles, redefining diverse forms of private realms, and actually thinking about who is managing whom, who is hosting whom, and who is kept down as a guest forever. The latter is, in some way, a crucial question. Maybe it is the role of universities, research centres, etc. to actually think about why we are not ready to redefine diverse forms of private and public spheres? If we are ready today in Europe to share and transform public spaces, are we serious about a multicultural society – or do we only need taxi drivers, or people to build our houses or cook for us? To which extent are we willing to share? This is a crucial question today in Europe, so this is what I can contribute to how we can think, and rethink, housing today.

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SANDI HILAL

Translating Social Housing for California

Helmi Hisserich

The origin story of social housing in Vienna is particularly translatable for Californians from a historical point of view. When you tell a Californian that in 1917 Vienna had 30,000 people living in makeshift shelters, we can visualise it. There are over 160,000 homeless individuals in California. In the City of Los Angeles alone, there are an estimated 41,980 individuals with no place to call home, more than half of whom are living in makeshift shelters on the streets. We experience the stark contrast between extreme wealth and debilitating poverty on a daily basis, and we recognise ourselves in Vienna's past.

California is pushing for change in housing and the sense of urgency is palpable. So it should be no surprise that we are looking towards Vienna for new ideas. Americans are drawn to success stories, and Vienna's transformation – from the site of the worst housing in Europe to the most liveable city in the world – is the kind of story that makes us want to know more. We want to know how Vienna reversed course. We want to believe that change is possible. We are looking for the path that will lead us into a new, more equitable, and more stable future. Social housing is currently gaining recognition as a possible solution to the urban housing crisis in the United States, but most Americans – even housing experts – know little about social housing.

The International Building Exhibition in Vienna (IBA_Vienna) gave international audiences an opportunity to learn about Vienna's unique social housing system. Through its seven-year long process of preparing the exhibition on social housing, IBA_Vienna purposefully invited outsiders to peek inside the housing system. Our firm, the Global Policy Leadership Academy, took this opportunity to bring a delegation of housing leaders from California to Vienna to learn. We are educators and we are affordable housing experts, so we set ourselves the task of translating Vienna's social housing policies and programmes into a language that Californians could understand.

At first, we translated technical information, converting Euros into US Dollars, square meters into square feet. We then made sense of the organisations and institutions in Vienna, converting department names and manager's titles from German into their American English equivalents. But as the process of translating Vienna's history, policies, and programmes progressed, we began to see that the language of housing in Vienna is different from our own. Hence the lessons we take home to California will never be direct translations; rather, they will be interpretations of ideas that help us create meaning out of Vienna's experience.

The history of housing in the US has been fundamentally shaped by racism, and the exclusion of people of colour from homeownership and prosperous neighbourhoods.

The century-old story of Vienna's 'Siedlerbewegung' or settler's movement feels familiar in Los Angeles, where a large grassroots movement called 'United to House LA' has grown into a powerful political force in the city. This past year, hundreds of coalitions of homeless residents, immigrants, working people, and trade unions joined forces to push for a tax on the sale of real estate valued at more than $5 million. The 'mansion tax', as it is sometimes called, was voted on in the November 2022 municipal election, winning 58% of the vote. It is estimated that this tax will generate $850 million per year for affordable housing, which is a 500% increase in funding. It is a game changer for Los Angeles.

About 20% of the funds raised by the ULA tax were set aside for mixed-income housing on public land with resident participation in governance. A native of Vienna would instantly recognise this as social housing, but in Los Angeles the plan was called 'alternative models of housing'. The term 'social housing' was thought to be too divisive. Nonetheless, housing advocates are working hard to design a housing model in Los Angeles that will remain permanently outside of market forces.

Vienna's policy of 'social mixing' generates an interesting conversation for Americans. We have an equivalent term embedded in federal law called 'Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing', which establishes a legal framework rather similar to the social mixing policies in Vienna. The American law is often referred to by the acronym 'AFFH', which obscures the meaning for almost anyone who is not involved in the housing field. Asking 'how is the AFFH plan doing?' sounds a lot more cryptic than 'how is the social mixing plan doing?' The term 'social mixing' is much clearer and more direct than the language we use.

Perhaps the reason for our confusing choice of words is because the conversation about social mixing in Vienna translates into a conversation about race in America. Americans often use coded language when discussing conflicts that stem from racial exclusion and white privilege. The history of housing in the US has been fundamentally shaped by racism, and the exclusion of people of colour from homeownership and prosperous neighbourhoods. We have a legacy of racial division that separates our communities both economically and spatially, and it makes us sceptical about Vienna's idea that 'everyone lives together'. Racial equity is one of the most pressing and important issues in the American public discourse and, to us, Vienna's policy of social mixing sounds like a dream, not reality. Yet the fundamental framework of community-building embedded in Vienna's social mixing policy is one we will be talking about for a long time.

Some Viennese ideas translate easily into a Californian context and seem very achievable in the near future: 'land banking' and Vienna's four pillar developer competitions fall into this category. We are already seeing these ideas taken up by members of the delegation that travelled to Vienna last year. One member of our delegation – the mayor of Fresno, a medium-sized city in California – told us that he put in place a developer competition for urban land following the Vienna model. A state legislator from our delegation drafted a bill to enable existing regional housing finance agencies to buy, hold, and dispose of land. On the flight home, two local government administrators rewrote a grant programme making $8 million dollars available for 'Housing Innovation for Public and Private Land'.

The Limited Profit Housing Association financing approach captured the imagination of several of our delegates because the cost-based financing model creates an avenue for scaling affordable housing development that our own, complicated low-income housing tax credit system does not. But the LPHA approach probably will not easily be applied in our system, because limiting profit in a hyper-capitalist economy is a complicated thing to do.

We are glad to see the ripple effects emanating from our delegation in Vienna. It gives us confidence that our translations and interpretations are helping to advance new and important ideas.

For now, though, we will be content with our process of translating ideas between cultures.

It seems that, with the growing awareness of social housing in the US and around the world, a more common language for social housing could emerge. For now, though, we will be content with our process of translating ideas between cultures. Experiencing Vienna's social housing for the first time, almost all the Californians in our delegation – people who are fighting a hard fight to solve the housing and homelessness crisis – consistently said one thing: 'Vienna gives us hope', and that needs no translation.

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Old and New Municipal Housing in Vienna, Handelskai (1976 / 2022).
(Photo: Judith Lehner, 2022)

How do WE want to engage with housing?

A (very personal) recollection of the IBA ResearchLab and its international summer schools

Amila Širbegović

The International Building Exhibition Vienna 2022, 'New Social Housing', kicked off in the Kuppelsaal at the Vienna University of Technology on 29 February 2016. I joined the IBA team as a project manager in the autumn of 2018 and the first public event in the context of my new position was the Vienna International Summer School, which took place for the first time in September 2018; it dealt with the topic of the transformation of (large scale) social housing from the post-war period.

One might expect that the topic of housing in Vienna – the city of social housing par excellence – has always been dealt with in an interdisciplinary way. While numerous people in many fields and disciplines have been working on this topic in Vienna, there has not been any inter-university and institutional bundling in an interdisciplinary sense until now. Within the framework of the IBA_Vienna, the Vienna University of Technology and the University of Vienna established a research cluster (ResearchLab) to promote interdisciplinary, critical and comparative research in the field of social housing and urban development. As a part of this, a series of annual international summer schools on relevant aspects of social housing was launched in 2018: transformation of post-war (large-scale) social housing (2018), the social dimension of social housing (2019), social aspects of housing and climate adaptation (2020), housing in post-COVID times (2021) and housing production in relation to economies of construction and housing (2022).[1]

One of the special features of the ResearchLab was the various links and extensions that grew over time, starting with Sociology (Uni Wien), Spatial Planning and Sociology (TU Wien), and IBA_Vienna (City of Vienna's Municipal Department 50). Conceived from the beginning as a laboratory and open space, this collaborative venture grew in several directions and, with each year, more committed actors joined. On the part of the Vienna University of Technology, in addition to the Institute of Spatial Planning, the Housing and Design Research Unit (from the Institute of Architecture and Design) joined the organisation committee. Numerous colleagues from the Viennese municipal administration and housing sector provided their expertise during talks, guided tours, and discussions with the international participants of the summer schools. The number of housing experts from all around the world or from the academic board and their involvement in Vienna grew over the years. In addition, the open conception of the entire collaborative project made it possible to react to topics that have affected us all deeply and become increasingly unpredictable: thus, it was possible to react almost in real time to the second warmest year (2019) in Vienna and to work out the topic of climate adaptation for the following summer school. Then the COVID-19 crisis took us all by surprise, but thanks to its open structure and free choice of topics, the ResearchLab was able to master the situation. Thus, the topic of post-pandemic housing was prepared and discussed for the 2021 summer school. As is well known, both planning and research entail lengthy processes that last many years and that, of course, is a good thing. However, the open conception of the ResearchLab enables a rapid response to current issues and even more importantly a much faster transfer of experience and knowledge, which are urgently needed – all this, moreover, at the international level.

Discussions and the exchange of ideas are another important special feature of these summer schools, strongly underpinning the transfer of knowledge: young researchers from all over the world were able to talk about social housing on an equal footing with officials from the City of Vienna. Each time it was amazing and, above all constructive, to see how pointed criticism could be when it comes from an external perspective. At the Vienna International Building Exhibition, we were very determined that people from around the world should not only learn from the Viennese model, but that the reverse should also happen: Vienna should learn from other cities, approaches, and ways of thinking. There is so much that we can and must all learn, because although local conditions may vary, the challenges of our times are the same. Indeed, 'learning from each other' is something that the ResearchLab purposefully enabled and intensively promoted. My personal highlights were the public (and free) events that took place every year where prominent, dedicated, excellent speakers from other countries entered into discussion with local partners in front of a mixed – Viennese and international – audience. This created even more of a bridge between research and practice, internationality and localism, while fostering the emergence of an international knowledge hub on social housing.

Right from the start, critics reproached the International Building Exhibition Vienna 2022 with a lack of willingness to experiment, long before it was even set up. They feared that an IBA based in the administration[2] of the City of Vienna would not enjoy enough free space to experiment. The IBA_Vienna dedicated its work to innovative processes within social housing planning and neighbourhoods – and achieved a successful end result. The circumstances surrounding this IBA did not allow for experiments because of the time factor, amongst other things. Moreover, given the times we live in, a legitimate question in relation to the topic of social housing has arisen: 'can we afford to experiment when action is the order of the day?'

What is needed, rather, are innovative ways of thinking, new ideas and a fast, strong, and well-practiced transfer of knowledge to implement these ideas both at the local and international levels. I have long been an advocate of enabling failure in order to learn, but the planet, our only home, is about to cast us off because of our many failures, and we no longer have the time to try things out or experiment. We have to act and, before that, we have to exchange, learn, and unite different disciplines, all kinds of institutions, and citizens – both locally and internationally, both in cities and rural regions, and in other countries and across other continents. More and more people around the world can no longer afford to pay their rents or energy bills; houses have to be renovated to make them climate-friendly without causing any additional damage; cities have to absorb many changes regarding public spaces as well as social and ecological sustainability; the planet must not warm up by more than 1.5°C. We can only achieve all of this if we take a collective approach, if we actually tackle the issues together globally.

Hence at this point, given the times we are living in, it is not enough for me to plead for more interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary work. We live in a globalised world in which the private housing market has already become an economic asset and no longer knows any national borders. Above all, however, housing is a human right[3] and this applies to all people: dignified, affordable, high-quality housing set in liveable neighbourhoods and equipped with great infrastructure must not be kept back exclusively for wealthy population groups.
It is high time to globalise social housing as well.[4] Following the foundation of the Research Center for New Social Housing, which arose from the ResearchLab and the intensive exchange of ideas during the summer schools of the past five years, nothing stands in the way of a solidarity-minded international knowledge transfer on social housing. What is more, where should this global movement start, if not in Vienna?

▲ Panel discussion at the IBA ResearchLab (Photo: Lena Coufal, 2019)

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1 https://www.iba-wien.at/iba-wien/iba-international/vienna-international-summer-school (accessed on 08.03.2023).

2 The International Building Exhibition tradition is already more than 100 years old. It was established in 1901 in the Mathildenhöhe in Darmstadt as a documentation of the art of building and residential culture; in architectural terms, the displays are regarded as a milestone of German Art Nouveau. Since then, there have been a number of International Building Exhibitions at irregular intervals. What they all have in common is that they have always been mirrors of their times in relation to social, technical, and cultural movements and developments. It originated in Germany, where an independent company established for this purpose has managed the organisation of the exhibitions.

3 Housing is part of fundamental human rights, as proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948, Article 25: https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights (accessed on 08.03.2023). The Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing was endorsed by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe on 16 April 2015: https://unece.org/housing/charter (accessed on 08.03.2023).

4 The idea of 'globalising social housing' came up in an exchange with a colleague from California, Beatriz Stambuk-Torres, who is currently successfully working on establishing a social housing programme, based on the Viennese housing model, in several cities in California (see also: Helmi Hisserich's article pp. 12–13).

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AMILA SIRBEGOVIC

Replicating achievements in Social Housing Production

Reflections on the relevance and replicability of Uruguay's and Switzerland's housing cooperatives' strategies towards the provision of affordable housing in El Salvador and Colombia

Jennifer Duyne Barenstein

In dealing with the possibility of knowledge transfer and translation of locally specific housing production modes into socio-economically, politically and culturally different settings, the following summary of a keynote lecture brings together local and international perspectives on cooperative housing, based on research projects in the field of housing in Switzerland, Uruguay, Colombia and El Salvador. Starting point of reflections on the relevance and replicability of housing cooperatives was the ETH-CASE research project 'Tackling the global housing challenges: relevance and replicability of Switzerland's and Uruguay's housing cooperatives' policies and strategies'. In the framework of this research project, we discovered two additional countries – Colombia and El Salvador – as particularly interesting, because in both cases housing cooperatives emerged within a post-conflict situation. In the recently started research project 'Negotiating Space for Cooperative Housing in Latin America: The case of post-conflict Colombia and El Salvador'[1] the interesting aspect is the relation between peace-building processes and cooperative housing movement, as observed in other post-war contexts. The related research questions are: What is the specificity of housing cooperatives in Switzerland and Uruguay? What are the historical, social, political conditions that facilitated the emergence of housing cooperatives in these two countries? What are policy instruments that allowed housing cooperatives to emerge but also to maintain an important role in their respective national housing systems overtime? And eventually, are these contextual factors that were key for the emergence of housing cooperatives replicable in countries like El Salvador and Colombia?

SWITZERLAND

Housing cooperatives[2] emerged at the end of the 19th century with a very strong growth between the 1930s and 1960s. Today in the face of an acute housing shortage (with a housing vacancy rate of 0,06% in Zurich), there is a re-emergence of housing cooperatives and the commitment of the City of Zurich to facilitate the growth of non-profit housing stock to one third of the total stock by 2050.

The Swiss cooperative housing model as a form of non-profit housing applies the principle of cost-rent, calculating the rent on the base of construction and maintenance costs. In average, rents in cooperative housing are 15% lower than on the private market in Switzerland, however in Zurich this number goes up to 36%. Two main enabling instruments facilitate the foundation of new housing cooperatives. First, access to land via a lease-hold basis from the government. Second, financial support of public bodies through the provision of subsidized loans, or by becoming a member, i.e. buying shares of the cooperatives.

There is a general commitment of housing cooperatives towards creating socio-demographically mixed communities with a contribution to entire neighbourhoods, the promotion of sustainable lifestyles and participation. Especially recently founded housing cooperatives are politically more active and take up the role of advocates for affordable housing. What is special about Switzerland – similar to Austria – is that housing cooperatives have not been subject to liberalization, as opposed to what happened for example as a result of neoliberal policy reforms in Germany and Sweden. As a result, cooperative housing remains an effective way to prevent the commodification of housing.

URUGUAY

The case of Uruguay is interesting since it is the only country in the Global South that has a strong housing cooperative movement comparable to European movements. Although housing cooperatives emerged later than in Europe, the social and political conditions had several points in common. Housing cooperatives emerged in the late 1960s, at a time when Uruguay had an important industrial sector, strong socialist parties and unions and relied on the self-help tradition and the organisational capacity of a unionized working class. The National Housing Law of 1968 provides a legal framework and defines the enabling instruments that are needed for the housing cooperatives to grow. Throughout the history the success and existence of housing cooperatives depended on the political support of governments in charge.[3]

Currently there are about 2,000 housing cooperatives of which the majority are located in the country's capital Montevideo. The main model of housing cooperatives in Uruguay is called 'mutual aid housing cooperatives' (span. ayuda mutua). Under this model to obtain a subsidized loan, instead of financial equity, members can contribute with their own labour, equivalent to 21 hours per week until the construction is completed. This approach allows also lower income people with no saving capacity to access cooperative housing. In order to obtain a loan from the government, housing cooperatives need to fulfil a wide range of conditions. Members need to be Uruguayan residents and not own any other property, the cooperative needs to be formally registered and comply with several rules and regulations to obtain a 'certificate of regularity'; they have to enter into a legal contract with an Institute of Technical Assistance (IAT) that supports them throughout the construction process. Furthermore, the cooperative members have to engage in several training courses, which deal for example with legal aspects, financial and construction management, and convey organisational and constructional skills. Lastly, the acquired land must be connected to infrastructure and the housing cooperatives need to have a complete project plan and be in the possession of building permits.

Uruguay's mutual aid housing cooperatives constitute an influential social movement committed to sharing their experience with other countries. Accordingly, for over 20 years, the Federation of Mutual Aid Housing Cooperatives (FUCVAM), accounting for over 630 housing cooperatives, has been active in international cooperation and in disseminating the Uruguayan model.

Through the existing legal framework, the Uruguayan government strongly regulates the rights and duties of housing cooperatives, monitors their operations and allocates the financing budget to housing cooperatives in its five-year plans. Additionally, the government has implemented strong eligibility criteria for potential members, to ensure that housing cooperatives are targeted towards lower income groups (incl. maximum income limit). Similar to the Swiss case, the municipal government plays a particularly important role in terms of providing funding, financial support and the provision of land. Land is sold by the City of Montevideo to the cooperatives at favourable conditions in form of a loan. Recently, housing cooperatives have been given access to old buildings for renovation in the historic centre of Montevideo as part of an urban renewal strategy seeking to recover the large number of abandoned buildings through centrally located affordable housing.

EL SALVADOR

After 20 years of civil war in El Salvador, a peace agreement was signed in 1992. The end of the civil war coincided with an interest in creating housing cooperatives, due to a qualitative and quantitative housing deficit. In 2004, with the support of the Swedish Development Cooperation through the NGO We Effect, the Uruguayan FUCVAM was able to go to El Salvador, in order to support the establishment of housing cooperatives. After systematic policy advocacy and a number of pilot projects could prove the potential viability and relevance of housing cooperatives to tackle the local housing needs also in El Salvador, in 2009 a legal framework was introduced, which officially recognizes housing cooperatives in the Cooperative Association Act as associations that are collectively owned and democratically controlled by their members. The legal recognition, thanks to the policy advocacy of the umbrella federation (FESCOVAM), is considered an important achievement in the endeavour to replicate the Uruguayan cooperative housing model in El Salvador. After a long time of trying to introduce cooperative housing, currently there are around 25 housing cooperatives, which are predominantly composed of women (70%) working in the informal sector (60%). Since 2012 there is also an attempt to use the mutual aid cooperative model for the urban renewal of the historic city centre of San Salvador, through a project funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation.

However, despite the progress made in institutionalising housing cooperatives several challenges remain. First of all, in many Latin American countries with neoliberal governments, there is a strong preference for private homeownership, resulting in a reluctance to accept collective homeownership. This results in the risk of housing produced by cooperatives being subject to commodification at a later stage. The acceptance of a cooperative production of housing, but the reluctance to accept collective ownership constraints the scaling up of this experience. Another challenge is posed by the viability of the mutual aid approach for destitute people with no regular employment. In fact, most of the housing cooperative members are female head of households, who cannot afford to work 21 hours on the construction site, take care of the children, and earn a living in the informal sector all at once. The difficulties to obtain durable institutional support for housing cooperatives, is compounded by the absence of bottom-up social movements and the strong dependence on international aid. These factors pose a real challenge to the sustainability of cooperative housing in El Salvador.

COLOMBIA

Housing cooperatives in Colombia are not entirely absent, but played a marginal role in the national housing system. Nevertheless, the country already has an existing legal framework for collective homeownership and officially recognizes housing

▲ Cooperative Housing in Colombia. (Photo: ETH CASE)

cooperatives as actors in the production of social housing. However, in the absence of enabling instruments, the sector was unable to develop. A renewed interest in housing cooperatives emerged following the peace agreement signed in 2016 after 20 years of civil war, which left behind an extremely polarised country and a severe quantitative and qualitative housing deficit. In particular two communities of ex-FARC combatants saw in cooperative housing a model that would possibly address both their housing needs as well as their desire to preserve their collective identity and to continue living together as a community. Their aspiration to establish the housing cooperative Ciudadelas de Paz led them to organise a study tour to Uruguay where they obtained training on cooperative housing from FUCVAM. With funding from international agencies in support of the peace building process they were able to start with the cooperative production of building materials, to purchase land and to develop a comprehensive cooperative housing project. Funding from various agencies was also expected to become available for the full realisation of the project. However, the former government was reluctant to support a project primarily aimed at maintaining the cohesion of communities of ex-combatants and made its subsidies to housing contingent upon individual land titles. For five years the communities of ex-combatants kept negotiating with the government for their right to a collective reincorporation through cooperative housing, but gradually lost their motivation and started to build their houses informally, with only limited external non-governmental support. Meanwhile, however, a new progressive government was elected in Colombia and there is a renewed interest in housing cooperatives as an alternative to the neo-liberal housing policies of the previous government. Cooperative housing initiatives are being started not only from ex-combatants but also from other groups of citizens and civil society organisations. Whether this will indeed lead to an emergence of housing cooperatives on a larger scale remains to be seen. The opportunities for housing cooperatives in Colombia lie in the already existing legal framework for collective homeownership, as well as the legal recognition of housing cooperatives as actors in the production of social housing. These however need to be complemented by enabling mechanisms, i.e. dedicated institutions facilitating access to funding, land and technical assistance. Last but not least, also in Colombia, while the cooperative production of housing is appreciated, a certain ambiguity towards collective homeownership prevails. Within the framework of our action research project we are closely interacting with the Ministry of Housing and we are currently also providing guidance to groups of citizens interested in establishing a cooperative, but it is too early to draw any conclusions on the future of housing cooperatives in Colombia.

IS THERE A RE-EMERGENCE OF HOUSING COOPERATIVES?

In the face of a global housing crisis, not only United Nations Habitat and the New Urban Agenda consider housing cooperatives as the third way of addressing the issue. Even transnational organizations, which have been fierce advocates of neoliberal models of housing in the past, consider housing cooperatives as a possible answer to the housing shortage. The cases of Switzerland, Uruguay, El Salvador, and Colombia show however, that several conditions need to be fulfilled for housing cooperatives to emerge. To this aim a legal framework is necessary but not sufficient condition. Indeed, legal frameworks need be supported by enabling institutional mechanism and resources such as land, loans and technical assistance, but also regulatory frameworks that ensure that cooperative housing is durably decommodified and targets those who most need it. Bottom-up social movements, i.e. a strong civil society, play a key role in demanding support for cooperative housing. Such pressure groups historically played a key role and continue to exist in Uruguay and Switzerland but are rather weak and dispersed in El Salvador and Colombia. In these two countries the housing cooperatives are primarily supported by international organisations, which however, have their own agenda and temporality and accordingly can neither replace state support nor the important role of civil society. Accordingly, whether in El Salvador and Colombia housing cooperatives will have a durable impact on their respective national system remains to be seen.

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1 Funding for these two projects from the Swiss Network for International Studies (SNIS) and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) is gratefully acknowledged.

2 The cooperative movement in Switzerland consists of approximately 2,000 housing cooperatives with a total housing stock of 180,000 buildings. A high concentration of housing cooperatives is found especially in urban areas, with the largest concentration in the city of Zurich, where 23% of the cooperatives in Switzerland are located.

3 Despite the popularity of housing cooperatives after their emergence, the military dictatorship in Uruguay (1973–1985) almost banned the movement. After the end of the dictatorship a democratic neoliberal government came to power and with it, the movement slowly started to return.

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JENNIFER DUYNE BARENSTEIN

The text summarizes the keynote lecture by Dr. Jennifer Duyne-Barenstein held at the event 'Mehr als Bauen' (engl. More than Building) at TU Wien on 27 February 2023. It built on the experiences and findings of the International Building Exhibition IBA_Vienna 2022 with the aim of a transdisciplinary exploration of research-relevant topics and questions on housing and urban development. 'Mehr als Bauen' was curated and organized by the City of Vienna - Municipal Department 50 (Strategic Projects and International Affairs) and the Research Center for New Social Housing (future.lab, TU Wien). The lecture was accompanied by a discussion with Dr. Julia Girardi-Hoog (Wiener Wohnen), Kurt Hofstetter (MA50, Department for Strategic Projects and International Affairs, City of Vienna), Dr. Judith M. Lehner (Research Center for New Social Housing, TU Wien), Dr. Margit Noll (JPI Urban Europe Board, FFG) moderated by Maik Novotny. Taking up the keynote and discussion, a workshop with invited Viennese experts from the city administration, research and practice held on 28 February 2023, intended to generate an impulse for further development in terms of content and for a future research-practice cooperation between the City of Vienna Municipal Department 50 (Strategic Projects and International Affairs) and the Research Center for New Social Housing. Some questions that resulted from the workshop were: What is the role of planning in transformation processes? Why do we need to pool resources and knowledge (and find new role models)? How do we create visions and narratives on transformation processes to bring everyone along? What are the levers that lead to transformation taking into consideration interests of civil society? How do we bring know-how into application? (JML)

Palace of Un/Learning: Glitching Mies

The never aging image of the Barcelona Pavilion by Lilly Reich with the help of Mies van der Rohe and its reconstruction from 1986 displays its fluid spaces and fake realities of a fictional manifesto of Modernism, presenting itself as a seemingly neutral, universal and self-referential architecture icon. As an undisputed reference, the pavilion represents the dominant narrative of the architectural canon: spaces emptied of any domesticity, framed by hard and prestigious materials and homogenous staged elements of objects, people and stories around it. But every building narrative has its accidents, cracks and glitches that can unleash "phantomed stories" [Jaque, 2020]. Glitching Mies embraces these blurring moments of counter visibility through occupying and irritating the well-known spatial and visual setting of the Pavilion, by transitioning its materiality, its boundaries and hierarchies. Thereby queering is introduced as a spatial practice for the "enactment of architecture" [Bonnevier, 2007], which implies the possibility to move, to interpret and to open static conditions of the Pavilion by disturbing the order of things. [Ahmed, 2006] This transformation is a joyful act as Paul B. Preciado states, "the crossing is a place of uncertainty, of the unobvious, of strangeness. It is not a weakness, but a power." [Preciado, 2020] Glitching Mies created a queer-feminist, participatory action, "a form of refusal" [Russell, 2020] of a dominant and exclusionary knowledge production and distribution, showing the transformative potential of otherness and multiplicity by un/learning and re/claiming the status quo. An ambiguous glitch where questions arise: What's good? Who is we? Whose histories are told? Within the opening event Cozy (Radical) Salon the installation was activated by a talk about dissident practices on the Furry Bed and two performers (Jayce and Iver Zapata) who used the glitch in the institutional setting to powerfully claim their space.

▲ Intervention Glitching Mies (Photo: Max Utech, 2023)

INTERVENTION

by Bernadette Krejs & Max Utech at the Mies van der Rohe Pavilion Barcelona, 27.04. - 28.04.2023

INTERVENTION

▲ Book release (Photo: Mies. Magazin 2023)

Book Release: *Vages Terrain: Fragmente einer Standortwahl von übermorgen*

Where will we live? Where will we be when we work or relax, and who or what decides that? How will we distribute ourselves on a damaged planet, and where will things be available to whom? Jerome Becker, Gunnar Grandel, Madlyn Miessgang, Mathias Mitteregger, and Sebastian Sattlegger explore these questions in their anthology titled „Vages Terrain." The book invites us to depart from familiar perspectives and consider new outlooks on what choosing a location in the city of tomorrow might look like.

FELLOWSHIP

Release
May 2023

Editos
Jerome Becker, Gunnar Grandel, Madlyn Miessgang, Mathias Mitteregger, and Sebastian Sattlegger

FELLOWSHIP

Social innovation and urban transformation

future.lab Research Center has established "Innovationswerkstatt" as a knowledge and research infrastructure for social innovations in urban development. Since one year we are hosting digital and analog – mostly public – events, support and initiate R&D projects, advise relevant stakeholders on the topic, and expand the network to transformative science and practice throughout Austria. Our open-access publication series is constantly being expanded with current contributions and first thematic anthologies are in the making. The "Innovationswerkstatt" is also a service to the inside of our faculty: Synergies with research and teaching activities have already been established. Our formats and offers can be used to explore topics, to reflect on ongoing projects or research results, to establish a network with practice or with potential partners, or to initiate new activities. We welcome your ideas and are open for collaboration!

INNOVATIONSWERKSTATT

futurelab.tuwien.ac.at/research-center/innovationswerkstatt

INNOVATIONSWERKSTATT

▲ Workshop of the "Innovationswerkstatt" at the "IBA Zentrum" (Photo: IBA Wien, 2022)

What is the future.lab?

The future.lab is a platform for experimental and inter- as well as transdisciplinary research and teaching in urban and spatial development at the Faculty of Architecture and Spatial Planning of the TU Wien. The platform is intended to create opportunities and promote initiatives that encourage research, teaching and practice to engage in an open exchange and strengthen their profile. In this way, the platform challenges teachers, students and colleagues from planning practice to develop concrete projects and initiatives and to translate the claim of a transdisciplinary scientific practice into concrete action.

NETWORKING AND BUNDLING OF CONTENT

The platform builds on the research fields and funding priorities of the TU Wien and the Faculty of Architecture and Spatial Planning. The program supports the discussion on concepts relevant to space and development, on strategies and projects from the fields of architecture, urban development, spatial planning, urban management and urban governance. Furthermore, it aims to promote the dialogue between spatial sciences and planning practice.

With the magazine, the future.lab is pursuing its goal of bringing established research focuses at the faculty to to public attention and making them visible.

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#17 WIE FORSCHT DIE FAKULTÄT?

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#16 LÄNDLICHER RAUM

Redaktion: Isabel Stumfol. Zwischen Romantisierung und Schwarzmalerei: Die Zukunft des ländlichen Raums

#15 DIGITALISIERUNG UND RAUM

Redaktion: Emilia Bruck, Madlyn Miessgang, Mathias Mitteregger. Transformation räumlicher Funktionen.

#14 CHRONO POLI(TIC)S

Redaktion: Jerome Becker. Zeitpolitische Formationen der Spätmoderne.

#13 CLAIMING SPACES

Redaktion: Claiming:Spaces Kollektiv Feministische Perspektiven in Architektur und Raumplanung.

#12 ANSÄTZE FÜR EINEN ANDEREN WOHNBAU

Redaktion: Andrej Holm, Christoph Laimer. Kollektive Wohnformen, selbstorganisierte Hausprojekte, alternative Finanzierungen.

#11 QUARTIER ALS RESSOURCE

Redaktion: Simon Güntner, Michael Obrist. Öffentliche Infrastrukturen, solidarische Nachbarschaften und lokale Ökonomien

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Die gesunde Stadt und ihre Infrastruktur: Medizin und Planung.

#9 DIGITALE TRANSFORMATION

Räumliche Konsequenzen technologischer Innovation und gesellschaftlichen Wandels.

#8 FORSCHUNG PLANEN

Reflexion von Stellenwert und Zukunft der Forschungstätigkeit unserer Fakultät.

#7 11 X 17 FAKULTÄT

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#4 DISKURSE

Themen–Perspektiven–Herausforderungen.

#3 KOMPLEXITÄT

Wir brauchen beides: Kernkompetenzen und den Blick über den Tellerrand.

#2 ENERGIEN

Neue Denkwege brauchen neue Formen.

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Eine Stadt ist Stadt, wenn sie mit sich selber uneins bleibt.