

*Landscapes of Care. Public housing across multiple
geographies: crossing theories and practices*



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Resonances

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“The commodification of housing and urban land has turned what should be a basic human right into an instrument of speculative profit-making, systematically excluding the poor and reinforcing class divides within cities.”¹

What remains when housing is no longer considered a need or a right but a commodity? This question frames the urgency of rethinking how we conceive and produce space today. The idea that the home is a private, apolitical realm has long been dismantled by scholars such as Christopher Reed, who, in ‘Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture’, frames domesticity as a contested cultural and political field.² From this perspective, the contemporary housing crisis is not merely a failure of supply and demand mechanisms, but the manifestation of deep structural inequalities, demanding a fundamental redefinition of what it means to inhabit collectively.

This panel examines how cooperative practices and participatory models challenge dominant paradigms by proposing new forms of collective living that emphasize agency, mutual support, and care as central to spatial production. John Turner’s influential argument in *Housing by People* – that when inhabitants control key decisions, housing becomes a source of individual and social well-being – remains highly relevant.³ Already in *Freedom to Build* (1972), Turner had introduced the idea of “housing as a verb,” stressing that housing should be understood not as a finished object, but as an active, ongoing process shaped by its users.⁴ Contemporary cooperative models adopt this perspective, framing housing as a living, adaptive system rather than a static commodity.

One of the articles presented in this panel, “Revitalizing Housing: The Vital Trajectories of Cooperative Systems” by Luisa Frigolett, expands Turner’s insights by integrating systems thinking, demonstrating how mutual aid cooperatives in Uruguay function as dynamic social ecosystems based on interaction and shared responsibility. Her analysis resonates with Donella Meadows’ concept of “dancing with systems,” emphasizing resilience through continuous adaptation.⁵ Nevertheless, systemic fragilities – economic instability, political pressures – highlight the precariousness of these cooperative models. Similarly, another contribution to this issue, “Collective Housing by Collective Practice: The Inclined Condominium in Bergamo” by

1 David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2012), 15.

2 Christopher Reed, *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996).

3 John F. C. Turner, *Housing by People: Towards Autonomy in Building Environments* (London: Marion Boyars, 1976).

4 John F. C. Turner, “Housing as a Verb,” in *Freedom to Build: Dweller Control of the Housing Process*, ed. John F. C. Turner and Robert Fichter (New York: Macmillan, 1972).

5 Donella H. Meadows, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2008).

Loris L. Perillo, Lorenzo de Pascale and Federica Mambrini, analyses the Terrazze Fiorite project, where collective architectural authorship redefines the production of space itself. This approach echoes Henri Lefebvre's proposition that "(social) space is a (social) product,"⁶ emphasizing how participatory models are deeply embedded within broader socio-political dynamics. Participation, however, is not without tension: collective decision-making often collides with individual aspirations, revealing the complex negotiations inherent in shared inhabitation.

Building upon this, Reed's notion of domesticity invites a deeper reading of cooperative housing initiatives. These are not merely technical alternatives, but cultural interventions that subvert dominant logics of privatisation and isolation. By foregrounding practices of collective care and mutual support, they resist the neoliberal framing of housing as a purely financial asset. Yet the balance between collective governance and personal autonomy remains a continual site of negotiation and contestation. This articulation between participation, care, and domestic space is further illuminated by the "Bairros Saudáveis" case study by Leonardo Ramires and Rita Ochoa, which documents participatory urban interventions in vulnerable Portuguese neighbourhoods. The bottom-up approach recalls the SAAL programme (Serviço de Apoio Ambulatório Local) of the post-revolutionary period in Portugal, reaffirming the political potential of resident-led urban transformation — while also exposing the challenges of sustaining participation in shifting socio-economic contexts.

Educational initiatives in architecture, such as the Yale Building Project, Auburn University's Rural Studio, and Studio 804 — discussed in "The Impact of Care" — demonstrate how embedding community engagement within design-build pedagogies produces not only more equitable housing solutions, but also a critical rethinking of professional identities in architecture. These models shift architectural education away from object-centred production towards relational, care-oriented practices.

Visual media, likewise, emerges as a critical agent in the reconfiguration of housing practices. As Walter Benjamin noted in 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', the reproduction of images carries profound political potential.⁷ In today's context of visual saturation and continuous digital streaming, photographic documentation serves not merely as an archive but as an active tool of critique — interrogating who builds, who inhabits, and who claims space. In this panel, photography does not passively record; it constructs dialogical spaces that challenge dominant narratives of ownership, authorship, and belonging. Thus, the works presented here affirm that cooperation in housing is not merely a technical fix or an economic adjustment, but a radical reconfiguration of social relations, domestic imaginaries, and spatial practices. By foregrounding participatory processes, mutual aid, and reimagined forms of domesticity as practices of care and resistance, they open pathways towards housing futures that are more inclusive, resilient, and just — while acknowledging that collective inhabitation remains an open, dynamic, and inherently contested project.

6 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

7 Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, trans. J.A. Underwood (London: Penguin Books, 2008).