

DO COMMUNITY LAND TRUST PRINCIPLES MODIFY THE ARCHITECTURE OF HOUSING?

The Case of the CLTB

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Abstract

The Community Land Trust (CLT) aims to create affordable housing to as many people as possible. To achieve this goal, it is based on a principle that distinguishes land and building ownership. This well-tried principle emphasizes the institution of common goods and the preservation of individual interests. On the one hand, the feeling of belonging is developed to make communities autonomous (J. Davis). On the other hand, the search for residents' fulfilment aims at their empowerment through housing ownership.

Although the model has been in place and well-tested for years in terms of governance and economic principles, it has not found an established expression in terms of space. In Brussels, for example, the first projects developed by the Community Land Trust Brussels (CLTB) mainly aim at economic viability and do not question traditional housing schemes. Nevertheless, alternative layouts are tested by architects, allowing for new ways of living.

In order to understand how the common good and particular interests are played out in space, the research proposes an analysis of the competition projects submitted for the CLTB. Their spaces are analysed in terms of the commons they produce and their capacity to manage individual interests. Commons range from the scale of the public realm, community, family and, eventually, the inhabitant. At the level of personal spaces and the freedom of choice of the inhabitant, several aspects are studied: the dwelling itself, the internal fittings, or the building finishing. The first results highlight how commons can go beyond the question of land tenure. At a spatial level, commons include collective rooms, shared by the inhabitants and the neighbourhood, circulation spaces, and even the building structure. Moreover, some of the proposals question the very notion of private ownership.

Keywords: Community Land Trust, Housing, Architecture, Brussels, Innovation.

Introduction

Economic Housing crises

From an economic point of view, recurring crises have struck housing in the Western world in the past centuries, from the rise of capitalism in the 16th century, to the industrial revolution in the 19th century, or the reconstruction of the post-war period. Today, we are facing another one at the turn of the 21st century.

Brussels is no exception as it faces today yet another housing crisis. In the city, the demand for housing has increased while affordable real estate has shrunk rapidly. This situation is due to a combination of factors: a population growth and migration flows (Deboosere et al. 2009), increasing real estate prices,

an impoverishing population (De Keersmaecker and Zimmer 2019), a growing waiting list for social housing which production has decreased for decades (Dessouroux et al. 2016), the spread of gentrification, an urban sprawl outside of the agglomeration as isolated homes with garden remain a dream for many (De Laet 2018) and a general reduction of the average living space (Tattara 2021).

To address these crises, alternative housing solutions are set up. On the one hand, innovative architectural typologies are imagined: combining housing with work, converting non-residential buildings into dwellings, reviving historical urban fabric through “neighbourhood contracts” or producing innovative morphologies (Porotto and Ledent 2021). On the other hand, some initiatives address the issue of housing tenure: collaborative housing (Lenel et al. 2020), housing squats (Dawance 2008), or temporary occupations (XXX). Amongst these initiatives is the Community Land Trust Brussels (CLTB). It is the first continental transfer of the Community Land Trust (CLT) model from America. It was set up in 2012 as “the result of long-term mobilization (2008-12) by the associative sector that was working for integration through housing” (Dawance 2019).

Do housing tenures shape housing projects?

Much has been said about the origins (Dawance 2019), the economic model (Bernard 2019) and the participatory processes of CLTs (Aernouts and Ryckewaert 2017). However, the resulting housing spaces have not been analysed in depth (Lenna 2019). To address this gap, this paper aims to question if and how the specific housing tenure developed by the CLTB shapes its housing projects.

Housing and land tenure: towards homeownership

According to many scholars (Ryan-Collins et al. 2017, Linebaugh 2014, Blomley 2007), the first major disruption in land and housing tenures took place in the 16th century when enclosures were introduced in the English countryside. Up to then, commons were a traditional and widespread tenure in most villages. It consisted in an open-field system accessible to peasants for agricultural uses governed by customary rights derived from their collective practices. Enclosures fenced off agricultural land that was used in common. By enclosing their properties, landowners produced a double exclusion. Land, as a material resource, was segregated from the community as enclosures exclude from others. As a social practice, enclosures disqualified the communal uses that took place on that land (such as gleaning, etc.). Moreover, the recognition through spatial delineation of these privately-owned landed properties made them tradable.

The phenomenon of enclosures marked the start of speculation on land, which was no longer seen just as a place to produce food (Ryan-Collins et al. 2017). This speculation was particularly acute in cities due to the high demand for housing, generating poor dwelling conditions. In reaction to this capitalistic approach, housing the poor emerged as a philanthropic issue and initiatives to limit speculation on land and housing developed from the 16th century on with examples such as the Fuggerei in Augsburg (Posener 1935).

This property right was further protected in the 18th century, to guard it from the will of the aristocracy, from which it remained vulnerable (Castel 1995). Private property was enshrined by the French Revolution to protect land owners from the arbitrary choices of the monarchy, and later on incorporated in most national constitutions as an inalienable right (Lenna 2019). As pointed by Arendt, this enabled a political emancipation of the bourgeoisie (Lenna 2019).

In Europe, the rise of the Welfare State combined with war-induced destructions launched major reconstruction programmes after World War 2 (Swenarton et al. 2014, Matznetter and Mundt 2012). If reconstruction took care of infrastructures, it also encompassed the massive production of public housing where the state remained the owner of the land. In parallel, homeownership continued its surge and was recognised a social function in many western constitutions (Bernard 2017).

After the social and economic crises of the 1970s, the Welfare States started declining, cutting greatly on their expenses and the production of public housing (Moran 1988). In Brussels, in particular, the production of public housing stopped dramatically from the 1970s (XXX). This decline of the Welfare State marked the intensification of “residential capitalism” (Ryan-Collins et al. 2017) characterised by booming housing prices, the pre-eminence of the market and a gradual privatisation of the social sector.

The turn of the 21st century is marked by a “financialization” of housing, that disconnects housing from its social function. This phenomenon aims at maximising profits rather than inhabitants’ wellbeing. In doing so, it depreciates housing as a human right.

In addition to this quick overview of the evolution of tenure, a few characteristics must be brought to light. First, a fundamental shift can be noted in housing from being primarily a means of shelter to an instrument for piling up wealth. Housing becomes commodified as it becomes an asset in the economic market. This dominating model has progressively “trained dwellers into privately owned domestic space” (Aureli et al. 2019). As homeownership emerges as the most widespread housing tenure in Europe, it has become the legal foundation and the “cornerstone of neoliberal policies” (Tattara 2021).

Second, as Winston Churchill declared, land monopoly is the mother of all other monopolies. Indeed, even more than housing itself, the value of land is growing much faster than that of housing. In the UK for instance, since World War 2, housing prices have multiplied by 5 while land prices have multiplied by 15 (Ryan-Collins et al. 2017). In the same way as housing, land has been financialised and is seen as an investment rather than a place to live in (Ryan-Collins et al. 2017). In addition, the key divide in many advanced economies is not earnings and productive activity but rather ownership of property. This trend is a major driver of economic inequality (Marx 1872, Stiglitz 2015).

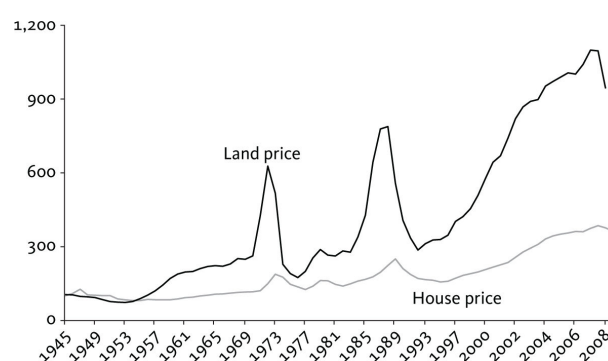


Figure 01. Real land and house price indices UK 1945–2008 (source: Ryan-Collins 2017, p. 30)

Eventually, this prominent model of housing and land ownership is extremely hostile to other forms of ownership, especially the commons. For instance, homeownership is based on the inviolable individual right to enjoy one’s property, generating a legal separation of people, between owners/non-owners. This definition makes “non-alienable common ownership seem like non-property” (Thompson 2015).

Form follows Finance: does Housing tenure affect Housing form

Housing tenure has thus evolved in Western countries towards a high predominance of homeownership which sees housing and land rather as an asset than a home. This commodification is marked spatially through the creation of visible spatial boundaries. A clear spatial separation of land is created, literally building the “exclusionary walls of capitalist enclosure” (Thompson 2015). Property becomes then a “spatialised thing” abstracted from its context, devoid of social relations (Blomley 2004).

Moreover, Aureli et al. argue that domestic spaces are in direct relation with the system of ownership (Aureli et al. 2019). They provide insights of how space gives a material form to private property. For instance, the terraced house is characterized by its party walls, while the detached house is characterised by a surrounding garden. In addition, what marks the private property is the single and very noticeable entrance, indicating a clear separation between public and private. The spatial repetition of these elements makes the notion of individual ownership even more prevalent. Furthermore, if the predominance of homeownership has inhibited alternative modes of tenures, it has also curbed their typological invention.

Anti-speculation: alternatives to the market

Affordable housing remains a problem while homeownership leads to exclusion. In this context, and the failure of private and public initiatives to address these issues, alternative modes of housing and tenure emerge. These alternatives share a common goal: to curb the speculative value of housing by retrieving it from the interferences of the market.

Utopian proposals, on the one side, provide guiding lines as to how radical alternative tenures could take place both socially and spatially. Thomas More, who coined the concept of utopia, sees in private property the cause of all inequalities. In this ideal society, private property is abolished and citizens do not own the land on which they live and work. Interestingly, the first part of his novel also provides a severe critique of enclosures that had just started to be implemented in England. On the island of Utopia, houses are all similar and must be exchanged every ten years. Moreover, in perfect contradiction to the single-entrance private property, house doors do not close and there is no back/rear opposition.

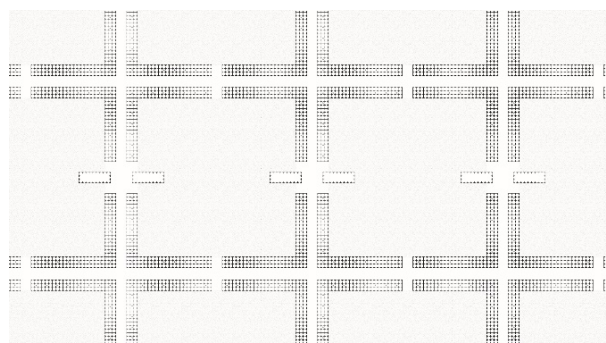


Figure 02. The permeable city fabric of Amaurot on Thomas More's Utopia (source: authors)

Other traces of anti-speculations and alternative tenures can be found in other utopian proposals such as Fourier, where the palace of the people – Phalanstère – is precisely owned by the people themselves on a cooperative model. Italian visionary authors such as Superstudio or Archizoom reconsider the question of public space, which is considered as a modern continuum that erases any residential individuality. In this largely collective approach of space, individuals are free to dwell as they please. Closer to us, in the 20th century, PM's Bolo Bolo is yet another alternative to conventional homeownership, staging a cooperating community limited in size (P.M. 1983).



Figure 03. Archizoom, *Non stop city internal landscape*, 1970 (source: Photo by Archizoom Associati)

Some of these visionary proposals have influenced real projects that seek to build a third option beside the dualist categories of public/private sector. Those alternative share the common determination to “lock in” the value of land and housing and protect it from private expropriation (Conaty and Large 2013).

In Howard’s Garden Cities project, and in particular in Letchworth, inhabitants were shareholders of a “cooperative land society” (Lewis and Conaty 2012). Through collective ownership of the land in perpetuity, the project delivered decent housing in the long term. Interestingly, together with an alternative mode of tenure, the project also produced new design principles that aimed to combine the benefits of country- and city-life. Letchworth’s architect, Unwin, believed that the introduction of the “cooperative principle” would induce a new age for urban planning (Boudet 2017).



Figure 04. Parker and Unwin, *master plan for Letchworth Garden*, 1903 (source: XXX)

However, the Garden Cities were not the first to implement the cooperative principle praised by Unwin. The first housing cooperatives emerged in England as building societies in the late 18th century. In this case, ownership was organised in a joint stock scheme. Once again, this alternative tenure produced innovative housing with various assets such as centralised kitchen or housekeeping, shared amenities, etc. After a period of stagnation and little typological innovation (Aureli et al. 2019), cooperatives have experienced a renewal in the past decades, in particular in Switzerland (Boudet 2017), generating interesting new forms of housing.



Figure 05. Schneider Studer Primas, Zwicky-Süd in Zurich, 2016 (source: Schneider Studer Primas Architekten)

More recently, self-initiated cohousing (baugruppen, habitat groupé, samenhuizen, etc.) have been set up to provide affordable housing by cutting off private developers fees (Ring 2013, Tummers 2016). While the design process includes an innovative – participatory – approach, tenures often remain that of a conventional condominium, where a series of spaces and amenities are shared (usually dedicated to cooking and laundry). This type of self-developed projects remains however limited to those that can access credit.



Figure 06. Zanderroth Architekten, Big Yard in Berlin, 2010 (source: Zanderroth Architekten)

CLTs rank among these alternatives to fight speculative property. Their origin can be traced back in the 1960s American civil rights movement to promote black property ownership (Dawance 2019). They rely on the principle of separating land ownership from the housing tenure. Thereby, they distinguish the value of the building owned or leased by residents and the value of the land it stands on owned by the trust. In doing so, CLTs take land off the market into community ownership. This de-commodified land is managed by three types of stakeholders including residents, experts, and the wider community (Davis 2010). In addition, the buildings value is subject to an “asset lock”: resale prices are capped, the CLT capturing part of the added value for further community benefit, making the system self-sufficient in the long term (Bernard 2019).

CLTs: From tenure innovation to housing project invention?

At this stage, the following question arises: while conventional homeownership and some of its main alternatives seem to have a spatial incarnation, does CLTs also have a spatial translation? While CLTs do indeed challenge traditional forms of tenure, do they also show innovation in terms of housing

projects? As noted by Martino Tattara, this might not be the case, as “the observation of some recent housing projects realized for example in Brussels by the recently active CLT reveals the development of quite conventional housing schemes in terms of spatial organisation, material definition and typologies, as if the political ambitions of its ownership model could not unfold into an innovative architectural agenda” (Tattara 2021).

Research hypothesis

Before assessing the impact of CLTs on housing projects, a clarification must be made. CLTs embrace simultaneously a material resource and social practices, freed from the transactional market. Within this definition, housing projects must be understood in a broader sense, not just limited to buildings, in line with the philosophy of Spatial Agency (Awan et al. 2013).

Limiting space to buildings “magnifies the commodification of architecture” (Awan et al. 2013). Therefore, in this paper, the traditional focus on architecture will be extended to space, shifting the attention from the sole building. This approach makes sense with the land-housing separation set up by CLTs. In addition, within CLTs, the production of space is not only the feat of architects and planners but of a network of actors. In this context, it seems logical to analyse the processes and the “agency” of individuals to intervene in the world (Awan et al. 2013).

This understanding of housing projects both as spaces and processes reflects that of the CLT as an articulation of the commons. On the one hand, space is understood as commons, a collective resource. On the other hand, processes relate to the practices of commoning (Linebaugh 2014). These practices comprise both involving inhabitants in the conception of their living environment as well as in the stewardship of the land.

Methodology and Data

Method

To understand how CLT principles regarding commons are understood and implemented in architectural proposals and how the residents’ choices can take place in this process, this research is based on an analysis of architecture competitions launched by the CLTB. In Brussels, any publicly funded architecture project (including CLTB’s) requires going through a competition process. The purpose of these competitions is to provide transparency and openness of public contracts while stimulating the architectural quality of the proposals. Following a call for projects, 3 to 5 teams of architects are selected to submit a design proposal. After a jury evaluation, one of the projects is selected to be built. These competitions constitute a significant resource for our research as they put at disposal different design responses to the CLT model, thereby allowing us to observe in what ways they might differ from traditional private or public housing architecture.

Our study was conducted in two stages. First, the projects specifications submitted by the CLTB to the competitions’ participants were analysed. These documents, including the briefs and a list of recommendations, form the main communication channel between the CLTB and the architects. They were created in collaboration with pools of possible CLTB residents, reflecting thereby the needs and recommendations of the future CLTB households. Analysing these documents allowed us to identify the objectives specific to the projects envisioned by the CLTB.

The second part of our analysis compared these objectives with the design proposals submitted by the architects. These proposals were analysed through both a spatial and a discursive lens. In order to grasp how these projects might challenge conventional housing, a focus was put on the spatiality of the

proposals through an analysis of graphical elements (plans, sketches, diagrams, pictures, etc.). At the same time, textual elements referring to the CLT principles were identified in the projects' descriptions.

Other approaches were considered, but have not yet been explored. First, the insights of project authors will be further explored through in-depth interviews as to investigate the potential influence of the CLTB-context on their design approaches. Besides, it would be interesting to analyse the differences, similarities, or evolutions in the projects of architecture firms who have participated more than once in CLTB competitions. Eventually, comparing the architecture firms' proposals in the context of a CLTB project to some of their other housing production could be enriching to explore whether working on a CLT project has led to a specific architectural expression.

Case studies

The CLTB was born in 2012 following the mobilization of several housing activism organizations to facilitate access to affordable housing for vulnerable groups in the context of housing crisis (Aernouts and Ryckewaert 2017, Dawance 2019). In addition to create affordable housing, it was created around the will of advocating future inhabitants' engagement (Dawance 2019). On a juridical basis, the CLTB consists of a tripartite structure governed on an equal basis by the residents of the CLTB, the public authorities and the civil society. This structure reflects the idea of actively engaging inhabitants in the creation and collective management of their housing conditions as an emancipatory process (Lenna 2019). In line with this idea, future CLTB inhabitants are involved in the shaping of their housing environment through a participative design process during all the phases of the project. The CLTB also encourages community living and neighbourhood services through a series of local initiatives. This specific role of the design process is not developed by many other CLTs (Lenna 2019), making it a specificity of the CLTB.

Our research focused on four CLTB architecture competitions launched between 2019 and 2020: Transvaal, Anvers, Abbé Cuylits and Tivoli. In total, 16 architects' proposals for these competitions were analysed, including winning and unselected designs.

1/ Transvaal is a project located in Anderlecht, in the Cureghem neighbourhood. Its program consists of 15 housing units, a collective garden and a space dedicated to a local association involved in the social integration of youths through sport.

2/ Anvers - Lumière du Nord is a project adjacent to the *Parc de la Senne*, in the district of Brussels North. It consists of 14 housing units, a collective garden and a local facility for the park guardians of *Bruxelles Environnement*, the latter including a multipurpose space shared with the inhabitants.

3/ Abbé Cuylits is the continuation of a temporary occupation of the site for a sociocultural centre since 2019. It will now host a 9-dwelling project and a collective garden.

4/ Tivoli is a project of 22 housing units located in a narrow plot in the sustainable neighbourhood of Tivoli, in the municipality of Laeken. In addition to dwellings, the project includes courtyards and gardens.

These four competitions were given very similar briefs and prescriptions by the CLTB, which facilitates the comparison of the design proposals. Their analysis will be challenged by a study of the project "Do you see me when we pass?" designed by Dogma in collaboration with the CLTB for the 2019 Seoul

Biennale. Freed of the usual competition constraints, Dogma aims to give an architectural translation of the CLTB principles of land and housing tenure. In addition to the analysis of the competition's entries and Dogma's project, our research is also informed by a field experience of CLTB's project pilot Arc-en-Ciel, which has been occupied by inhabitants since 2020.

Results

Two types of analyses have been conducted, focusing on the competitions briefs and the spaces they produced.

Brief analysis

First, a study of the project's briefs, program and recommendations allowed us to identify the specificities of a CLTB project in terms both of the spaces and the processes it implies. A difference was made in our analysis between collective and domestic spaces in light of the distinction made by the CLTs between land ownership and housing tenure.

Spaces

Collective spaces and the building of a community

In the documents analysed, the CLTB invites architects to propose *innovative spatial solutions* for collective functions. These collective spaces are envisioned to enable “togetherness” by supporting interactions between inhabitants amongst each other and between inhabitants and the neighbourhood. A transversal reading of the program, the briefs and the recommendations of the CLTB projects led us to identify four main collective spaces: the common circulation, the collective garden, the multipurpose space and the common amenities. Beside these, the CLTB also invites architects to explore the potential of other spaces that could be shared between the inhabitants (e.g. collective storage, workshop, etc.)

- 1/ *Common circulation*: In addition to distributing the different functions, circulation spaces are described by the CLTB as contributing to “the quality of life of the inhabitants” and should be designed to stimulate informal meetings and interactions. However, the CLTB also stresses the need to minimize circulation spaces (stairs, corridors and elevators) as to limit the project's costs.
- 2/ *Collective garden*: Envisioned as a place to relax, to play and to meet with other residents of the project, the collective garden should be designed, according to the CLTB, to facilitate the relationship between children and adults.
- 3/ *Multipurpose space*: In the different projects, the CLTB requires the integration of a multipurpose space that could be used for various social interactions between inhabitants at various moments of the project (e.g. residents meetings, parties, homework schooling, etc.). This space is also put forward by the CLTB as an opportunity to meet with the neighbourhood through the integration of a local association in the project.
- 4/ *Common amenities*: Beside being functional spaces, common amenities (e.g. laundry room, car and bike parking, stroller storage, etc.) are also put forward by the CLTB as spaces of encounter. They should thus be designed as qualitative spaces that could be used for other collective purposes.

Architectural solutions

To meet these objectives without significantly increasing the project costs, several architectural solutions proposed by the CLTB have been identified. To begin with, the architects are invited to configure the *space's modularity* in such way as to enhance the adaptability of the building over time.

The flexibility of space should be thought to host, on a daily base, multiple functions and uses but should also be adaptable to respond to the long-term evolution of the households. In order to favour the inhabitants' meetings and interactions, the CLTB also encourages architects to allow *visual interactions* between the different collective spaces. An emphasis is also put on the *porosity* between the project and the neighbourhood (in particular in the ground floor collective spaces). According to the CLTB, these spaces should be designed as opened towards the neighbourhood with views through the building, linking the street to the collective garden. Eventually, the CLTB calls for a *reduction of the building footprint* in favour of a qualitative collective garden for the residents.

Domestic spaces

In contrast to the CLTB's call for innovative solutions regarding collective spaces, the domestic spaces requirements are far more conventional and functional. They point at minimum living areas, orientation quality, privacy, accessibility, diversity of typologies, technical equipment, acoustic comfort or even material use. Spatial creativity seems much less of a priority when it comes to these domestic spaces. Taking into account the evolving needs of households is stressed however in the briefs (e.g. in terms of mobility and size of the household) by integrating transformation possibilities in the designs. Nevertheless, these general prescriptions do not explicitly question domestic spaces and seem to refer more to accessibility issues for people with reduced mobility than to innovative spatial responses.

Participation

As mentioned before, the participative approach is specific to the CLTB. It concerns the design of the project as well as its management and maintenance. Beside aiming to develop future residents' empowerment and capacity-building, this process also aims to create bonding dynamics between the inhabitants (Aernouts and Ryckewaert 2017). *Archilabs* are organized to collect ideas and reflect with the inhabitants on the design aspects of the projects. According to the CLTB, these workshops allow architects to develop designs adapted to the needs and concerns of the future inhabitants. However, these workshops involve CLTB candidate that may not be the future inhabitants of these specific projects. The future inhabitants can only take part in the participative process of their future housing after the planning permission is obtained, which limits their room for manoeuvre. In the analysis of competitions' documents, the CLTB mainly stresses the importance of this process to prepare the future inhabitants to the management and the maintenance of their housing project. This process consists of series of meetings prior to the project construction, during the construction phase, and following the occupation by the residents.

Project analysis

The second part of our analysis is based on a study of the architects' designs. Following the first part of our analysis, we identified spatial elements favourable to the exploration of the CLTB project's specificities: *the common circulation, the collective garden, the multipurpose room, the common amenities, the structure and the domestic space*. The architects' proposals for these spaces were analysed in terms of their spatial characteristics, and in terms participation potential.

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Table 01. Analysis of the competition entries

Collective spaces

By a transversal reading of the design proposals, we observed that most of them focused on the articulation between individual, collective and public spaces. On the one hand, collective spaces are presented by the architects as *transitions* between domestic and public spaces or as a filter to allow privacy. On the other hand, these collective spaces are also defined as *extensions* of both the private and

the public spaces. Some projects emphasize this idea of extension by describing the collective spaces with a vocabulary belonging to the *domestical* and *urban* lexical fields. For instance, the common circulation is described as *streets* and *squares*, as a *suspended walkway* or as a *summer living room*. The collective garden is also presented as a *central village square* or even as *an exterior room*.

The common circulation is considered in the different proposals as part of the collective spaces. While serving the main spaces of the project, it is also a place of appropriation and encounter, with multiple potential uses for the inhabitants. We decided to take a closer look at the circulation in the projects' proposals to see how its relationship with public and domestic space is shaped. This common circulation is mainly explored by the architects through four elements:

1/ *Collective entrance*, described in several of the projects as a *carriage door*. It is conceived as a porous passageway that enables physical and visual connections between the neighbourhood and the collective garden. Oversized and sometimes covered, it allows for various appropriations by the inhabitants and marks the collective identity of the project. It is conceived as a transition between the public space and the collective garden as well as their immediate extension: becoming a covered courtyard for the garden or for neighbourhoods' events.



Figure 07. V+, Abbé Cuylits competition, 2020 (source: V+)

2/ *Landings* are designed as the transition between the domestic, collective and public spaces. In several proposals, they liven the façade and allow visual connections across the building. They form both a place of encounter and of contemplation. Often oversized, they are also considered in some of the projects as domestic space extensions: becoming loggias or terraces for their adjacent living units.

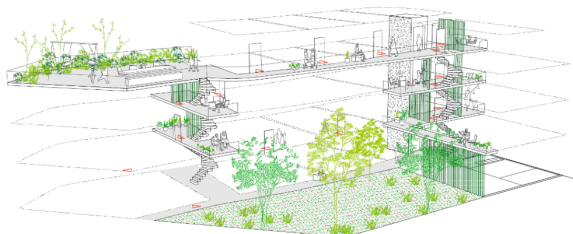


Figure 08. PTA architects, Transvaal competition, 2019 (source: PTA architects)

3/ *Exterior galleries* liven the streets or the collective gardens and are designed as spaces of encounter and contemplation. Presented as *covered streets* or *exterior corridors*, these *residential galleries* are the transition between the private, collective and public spaces. They also form their natural extensions, by creating additional collective or individual terraces or allowing collective and individual appropriation.



Figure 09. Beau Architects, Tivoli competition, 2020 (source: Beau architects)

4/ *Staircases* are conceived as transitions between the public space and the collective spaces. They liven the façade and allow for various visual connections across the building. They are punctuated by landings and form a place of contemplation and encounter. When they offer large dimensions, they can also be appropriated, for example, as a small amphitheatre for the inhabitants.

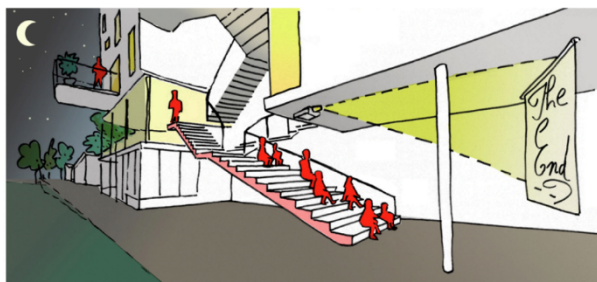


Figure 10. Pierre Blondel Architectes, Anvers competition, 2020 (source: Pierre Blondel Architectes)

Domestic spaces

Our transversal analysis of the projects' domestic spaces reveals a rather literal reading of CLTB's requirements. Most of the teams highlight the spaces' quality through the diversity of typologies, the presence of a private exterior space, the multiple orientation, the generosity of space or the views on the collective garden. As shown before, CLTB's requirements regarding domestic space relate mostly to normative or functional issues and do not see spatial innovation as a priority. This idea can also be traced back in the design approach of *Stekke & Fraas* for the project *Arc-en-Ciel* that they define as "favouring repetition over exception, improvement over experimentation". Several proposals explore the evolution possibilities of the dwellings through different solutions. Some propose a free plan with non-structural panels to allow for various domestic layouts. Others design repetitive identical rooms to enable flexibility. However, this potential for modification is often anecdotic and limited to the given surface of the individual living units and do not radically challenge conventional domestic layouts.

The idea modularity is explored in a more radical way in Dogma's project "Do you see mee when we pass?". For these architects, "A radically progressive and socially emancipatory domestic architecture is the result of the attempt to give a spatial and material definition to the immaterial dimensions of land ownership and housing tenure" (Aureli et al. 2019). In this respect, Dogma proposes a prototype that translates CLTs' principles in into a housing design. Following a series of workshops with the CLTB around the needs of future inhabitants, they propose a project that allows for an evolution of domestic spaces. In line with Avi Friedman's ideas on evolutive housing (Friedman 2002), Dogma's project

consists in series of equal bays framed by walls which contain all the fixed utilities of the living unit (bathroom, kitchen, etc.), while allowing for further partitions. The partition walls in Cross Laminated Timber panels allow inhabitants to participate in the construction of the building and to modify it according to their needs. This proposal opposes traditional dwelling architecture where walls are unchangeable boundaries. Housing can expand or decrease according to the needs and allows for the transient nature of family living.

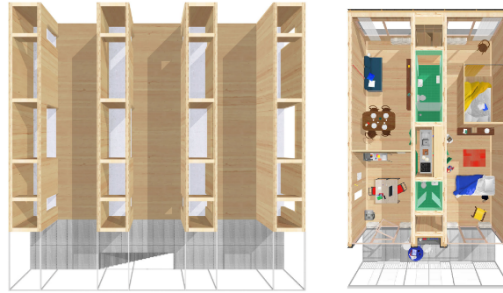


Figure 11. and 12. Dogma, *Do you see me when we pass?*, 2019 (source: Dogma)

Participation process

It is worth noting that the architects had no interaction with the CLTB nor the future residents during the competition process. Their proposals regarding the participative process are limited to a phase of the project when the design will already be highly defined. We identified four ways suggested by the architects to involve future inhabitants in the design process. First, by defining more precisely the *collective garden's* design (materials, equipment, types of plants, etc.). The garden is considered in several proposals as the *support of expression* of the inhabitants. A second way for the architects to involve inhabitants is through the choice of some interior *finishing colours and materials*. Another proposal is to enable variations in the *living unit floorplan* (e.g. open or closed kitchen, switch of some functions, etc.). Finally, several *extra-spaces* such as the roof terrace or a multipurpose room for laundry, storage or workshop are left undefined to let more room for manoeuvre to the inhabitants' individual choices¹.

Discussion

The commons, beyond land

These results shed light on the fact that the commons are not restricted to the shared ground of the CLT's projects. The land goes beyond this idea of ground and includes a multitude of collective spaces throughout the projects. In this sense, the proposal of the *Atelier d'Architecture Alain Richard* for the Transvaal project is enlightening as it envisions the commons as a *three-dimension* space:

"(...) we wanted that the space in the interior of the plot dedicated to the garden and the courtyard, would not be limited to the space of the ground but would be truly experienced in all three dimensions, in particular through the outside distribution and access to the housing units, within this community space."

¹ At this stage, we did not have access to all the proposals concerning participatory processes. Other solutions might have been explored in addition to those listed here.

Beside the collective garden, other collective spaces should be taken into account as they are also owned by the Trust. These include common circulation, roof terraces, multipurpose spaces, or even common amenities.

Housing Tenure

According to Aureli et al. (Aureli et al. 2019), there is a strong relationship between housing tenure and typology. Unlike the other proposals made by the architects regarding the CLTB model, Dogma's project challenges the very notion of property, as individual property is no longer marked in space. Their project questions thus the principle at the core of the CLTB: the distinction between housing tenure and the land as a common. In addition to the collective use of land, it brings to light the possibility to also negotiate private space between inhabitants.

The stronghold of domestic spaces

Our analysis revealed that, if collective spaces are subject to architectural explorations, domestic spaces remain largely unchanged in the CLTB projects. The domestic space is still anchored in a conception of traditional family housing and the spaces proposed remain thus very conventional. These do not build on past experiences that challenged the world of domestic life such as the one-kitchen houses, alternative models brought forward by material feminist or home clubs. Another unexplored idea is the exploration of designs that would be inspired by megastructures, where inhabitants would be able to build their dwelling as they please on a structure that would belong to the Trust (e.g. Otto Frei in the 1987 Berlin IBA, Maurios in Les Marelles, Berlin's R50 Baugruppe, etc.).



Figure 13. SITE, Highrise of Homes theoretical project, 1981 (source: SITE)

Conclusion

The CLT model as it is implemented in Brussels offers a series of innovations but also limitations. Homeownership remains a strong asset of CLTs, but it could also fuel indirectly residential capitalism. In addition, the lack of architectural invention in domestic spaces could be attributed to the pre-eminence of the private homeownership model. In fact, its conventional translation into domestic spaces influences both competition codes and future residents who tend to opt for traditional layouts, dismissing alternative ways of living and hence innovative typologies. Interestingly however, CLT projects also question through design its very tenure model to allow for more flexible and inclusive ways of living.

The demise of homeownership

Residential capitalism characterised by housing commodification is the main factor of the economic crises mentioned earlier. In this model, housing is understood as an economic investment, a “vehicle for accumulating wealth” (Ryan-Collins et al. 2017) rather than a place to live. Moreover, homeownership provides a social status, as it is seen “as the essential step to obtain membership of an expanding middle class” (Forrest et al. 1999). It is in this economic and social context that CLTs envision homeownership as a means of emancipation.

However, if indeed CLTs provide economic security and social status to their residents through housing, the mixed tenure they propose does not entirely remove housing out of the possession exclusion mechanism of homeownership. The reliance of CLTs on the principle of homeownership as a means to achieve emancipation and citizenship can also be questioned through the limits of the system itself. The promotion of homeownership is based on its provision of decent homes together with a capital asset. But this recipe also creates the conditions to its own demise (Ryan-Collins et al. 2017). Stimulating homeownership can only lead to increasing real estate prices. This feeds a vicious circle as interested buyers go into increasing debts, demonstrating how fragile and inefficient this economic model is.

Josh Ryan-Collins traces a series of possible alternatives to this model. They could work as a combination of public ownership of the land that would remove it from the market, the pooling of large investors that could invest in a coordinated fashion on the long term to avoid competition among them, land value taxes that would capture the added value of real estate development rather than the actual taxes on flows of income and expenditure, etc. Above all, alternatives to conventional homeownership must be sought to tie together once again the social and material aspects of housing. While housing as a commodity operates as an abstraction, other ways of tenure could reconnect inhabitants with the act of dwelling.

Space of invention vs Space of empowerment

CLTB's founder Geert de Pauw mentioned in 2016 that the CLTB was not a project of architecture. This position hints at why the model is not a first and foremost place for architectural invention. However, if innovation cannot be found *per se* in architecture, the consideration of housing projects in the sense of Spatial Agency brings about other considerations.

First, when attention shifts from buildings and privately-owned domestic spaces, a series of innovations can be noted. Collective spaces are treated generously and can act either as extension spaces for the dwellings or as public spaces. The large openness and visibility of these spaces offers a potential for

rewarding residents' actions, as can be noticed in other CLTB's built projects such as Arc-en-Ciel². If domestic spaces remain conventional in most competition entries, Dogma's proposal is worth noticing, as it creates a completely new constellation of possible domestic layouts. Second, in terms of process, the participatory production of space, even if only partial, enables a genuine involvement from the residents. In addition, the model produces a dynamic and evolving sequence, as residents are still part of the management of the common spaces and the land they live on. Interestingly, if invention is not central in these proposals, their empowerment potential is. Generous shared spaces and production processes empower residents, in the sense that they are able to "engage in their spatial environments in ways previously unknown or unavailable to them, opening up new freedoms and potentials as a result of reconfigured social space" (Awan et al. 2013).

Space for long-term projects

The analyses of CLTB competition entries demonstrate that the domestic space arrangements do not allow for a lot of flexibility and evolutions, aside from Dogma's project. This could also be noticed in the Arc-en-Ciel project, where, for instance, a family learnt that they were expecting twins right after signing their notarized deed, realising that they will have to give up their apartment because it will soon become too small for their needs.

In order to meet these challenges, several adjustments could be made to the actual CLTB model. First, housing exchanges could be organised between residents without generating extra expenses (notary fees, etc.). This, for instance, is already quite common in housing cooperatives, where yearly meetings are organised to put together people desiring to move within the pool of housing of the cooperative (e.g. Kalkbreite in Zurich). Dogma's proposal could instigate another solution. Based on evolutive housing, the design challenges the conventional layouts of domestic spaces. Such a system would require however a constant renegotiation of private spaces between inhabitants to redefine their dwellings at different stages of life. If this principle of communicating vessels is recurrent in the collective and public realm (XXX), one might have doubts on the practicality of the model for domestic spaces³. Nevertheless, this design invites to a new form of tenure, where residents would rather own shares of the building than space itself. This type of tenure is similar to that of Granby in Liverpool, which, on top of a CLT, is a Mutual Home Ownership Society, where members own shares a cooperative society.

In Belgium, the CLT model is still in its initial phase. The (re)consideration of plain homeownership, the focus on residents' empowerment and alternative tenure model such as cooperative societies could be keys into imagining its future evolution.

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² <https://www.cltb.be/vandenpeereboom-arc-en-ciel/>

³ Another free-plan system was set up in Brussels in the Mémé in the early 1970s by Lucien Kroll, but the potential of moving around dwelling walls was rather a myth than a common practice among residents.

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