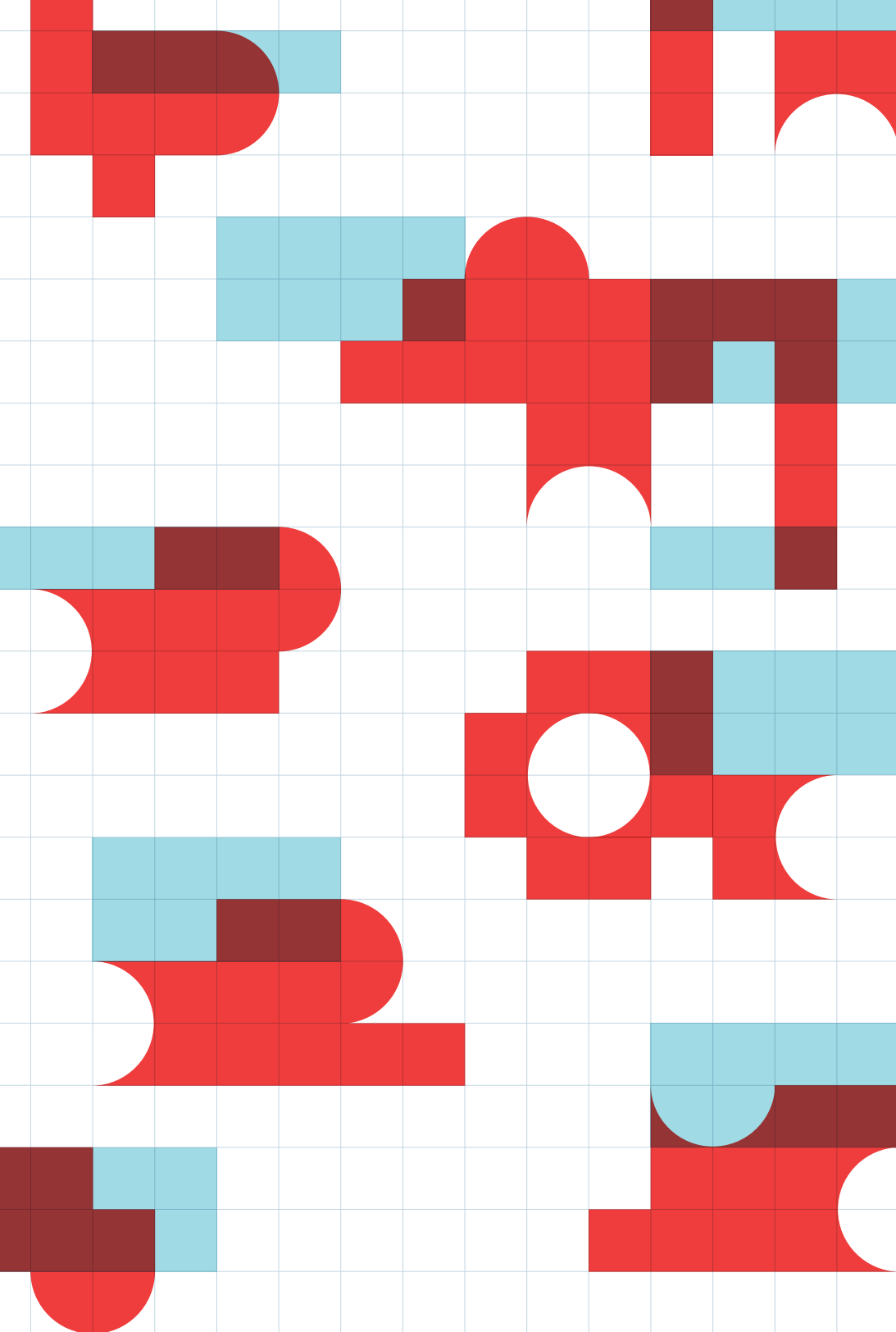




Gérald Ledent, Chloé Salembier & Damien Vanneste (Eds.)
Foreword by Herman Hertzberger

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Registration of copyright: D/2019/9964/76

ISBN: 978-2-87558-914-9

ISBN PDF version: 978-2-87558-915-6

Printed in Belgium by CIACO scrl – printer number 100235

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Graphic design: Anaïs Cuillier

A restricted private print edition of this book, with sewn binding, was printed on:

Cover: Munken Print White 15, 300 g

Interior: Munken Print White 15, 115 g

Distribution: www.i6doc.com, on-line university publishers

Available on order from bookshops or at

Diffusion universitaire CIACO (University Distributors)

Grand-Rue, 2/14

1348 Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

Tel: +32 10 47 33 78

Fax: +32 10 45 73 50

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Distributor in France:

Librairie Wallonie-Bruxelles

46 rue Quincampoix

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librairie.wb@orange.fr

Foreword

We have to restrict architecture to its basics if it is to stand up to time and thus become sustainable, as opposed to becoming obsolete as a result of new ideas. We must reduce conditions to the most elementary and generally applicable, and refrain from highly specific, and thus short-term, measures, which are better left to interior designers. Elementary conditions are the urban setting of a project and also its space structure, which can be interpreted for different tasks.

Think of a building as a city, with its stable public space and defined and sustainable building lines. It is this public area that contains the heart of social exchange. This is unlike conventional thinking, which holds that a building may be changed or replaced over time.

We could limit ourselves to designing building floors open to different tasks, like those of most factories, such as the famous Van Nelle factory now inhabited by a great many firms, which shows that a building can have an identity independent of its content. It depends on a strong and characteristic 'structure' and ultimately the space it yields. But if a generic space 'allows' interpretation, it does so passively. The idea of polyvalence is to design in such a way as to actively induce interpretations.

The idea of distinguishing structure and infill in architecture was derived from the linguist Noam Chomsky with his theory of generative grammar, making the distinction between competence and performance, which inspired me to adapt it to architectural design as polyvalence open to interpretation.

Everything we design in terms of built form needs to be polyvalent, i.e. interpretable, yet unchanging in all situations, thus being appropriate for many tasks, for example: representing a competence that can be addressed on demand. The only task that can be considered universal and thus topical at any time is habitation, for which there is a constantly increasing need that sooner or later might come up and oust any other kind of occupation. And this is why we should tailor our space units to be appropriate for housing as a basic condition.

Herman Hertzberger

Sustainable dwelling

Polyvalence and empowerment

Gérald Ledent, Chloé Salembier,
Damien Vanneste

*'I do not attribute any wild power to architecture. [...]
Architecture does not create the social conditions
but, nevertheless, an architectural solution is never
meaningless, it is never without aftermaths.
It always has an influence on social practices,
it can favour or refrain certain social practices.'*

Jean RENAUDIE ¹

1.

"Je n'attribue pas un pouvoir démentiel à l'architecture. [...] L'architecture ne crée pas les conditions sociales mais, par contre, une solution d'architecture n'est pas innocente, elle n'est jamais sans conséquence. Elle a toujours une influence sur la pratique sociale, elle peut favoriser ou contrarier certaines pratiques sociales." (authors' translation). Buffard, P. (1993) *Jean Renaudie : ouvrage réalisé à l'initiative de Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, directeur de la Sodedat 93 à l'occasion de l'exposition 'La logique de la complexité dans l'œuvre de Jean Renaudie'*, Paris: Institut français d'architecture.

The 'Sustainable Dwelling' project aims to examine the articulation between the social and spatial dimensions of dwelling from the perspective of sustainability. The ambition of the project is twofold: to address the issue of sustainability in the field of housing and understand how built projects implement it, as well as how inhabitants put the projects to the test.

While the ultimate objective remains the operational potential of sustainability in housing, the research ambitions are thus primarily theoretical and analytical. In each of these scopes, dwelling is examined in terms of both its spatial and its social organisation. From a theoretical point of view, the project seeks to identify, in the field of housing, the pervasive properties of 'sustainable space' along with the variety of socio-cultural backgrounds that can embody them. Hence, the permanent features of the spatial and social structures of dwelling are investigated beyond contextual variations (geographical or temporal). From an analytical point of view, the purpose is to comprehend the concrete implementation of the concept of sustainability in housing. This understanding is based on cross-referenced studies of various built collective housing projects carried out by scholars in architecture and the social sciences.

Sustainability in general

The terms 'sustainable city' and 'sustainable housing' are everywhere. The success of the concept as a referential background is such that it is becoming difficult to distinguish the initial ideas from the outcomes of those ideas but also from the goals set in the name of 'sustainability'. Sustainability is often acknowledged as an ecological quest aiming either for energy efficiency or economic viability for consumers. In the worst-case scenarios, sustainability is nothing more than idle talk or political rhetoric. In better cases, however, these initial ideas translate into practical means of building the city and housing.²

2.

Hajek, I. and Hamman, P. (2014) *Villes du Nord, Villes du Sud : la durabilité, entre prêt à penser et opérationnalité*, Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes.

The most consensual definition of sustainable development is provided by the Brundtland Commission report:

*'Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: the concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organisation on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.'*³

A closer look at this definition of sustainability shows its proximity with the contemporary paradigms of the degrowth movements (convivialism, transition, voluntary simplicity, etc.).⁴ If reference is made to the Brundtland definition, the questions raised by sustainability can no longer be limited to a mere ecological issue. On the contrary, this definition recalls the holistic nature of the issue and the systemic character of the changes we are confronted with (in terms of relationships to oneself, to others or to the entire environment). In view of this evidence, in the case of residential spaces, sustainability is a comprehensive issue that affects the spatial constitution of inhabited premises as well as the social practices of the inhabitants. Hence, it is natural to combine the two features in an attempt to determine what a sustainable dwelling is.

However, combining the social and the spatial approaches to dwelling in order to understand sustainability is not necessarily a given.⁵ Hence, before trying to connect the two approaches, a closer look will have to be taken at the concept of sustainability from a spatial and a social point of view.

3.

Brundtland, G. H. (1987) *Our Common Future*, United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development.

4.

Lievens, L. (2015) *La décroissance comme mouvement social ? Discussion théorique, perspective critique et analyse sociologique de l'action militante*, unpublished thesis Université catholique de Louvain.

5.

Gans, H. J. (2002) 'The Sociology of Space: A Use-Centered View', *City & Community*, 1(4), 329-339.

Sustainability from a spatial point of view

In accordance with the Brundtland definition of sustainability – namely meeting the needs of the present time without compromising future needs – sustainability from a spatial point of view, and hence in domestic architecture, can be understood as a means to produce perennial spaces for human habitation in the sense that they are able to meet present and future needs. Yet this permanence is challenged by the rapidly growing obsolescence of inhabited spaces.⁶ Spatial obsolescence is due to three types of changes. First, the traditional forms of kinship, partnership, social relationships, education and societal codes evolve promptly. These rapid evolutions of ways of life have a direct impact on defining the functions within residential architecture.⁷ Second, new construction materials, structural solutions and servicing systems are emerging at a very fast pace. These evolving building techniques challenge the constructive dimension of architecture.⁸ Third, the conception of fashion, tastes, stylistic or formal values are relentlessly changing. Moreover, as with social conventions or construction techniques, there is no longer a prominent and shared aesthetics. Once again, the constant renewal of aesthetic codes jeopardizes a perennial implementation of architecture. The three challenges to architecture concern its Vitruvian principles of *utilitas*, *firmitas* and *venustas*. Clearly, these three current challenges directly affect the founding principles of architecture. Consequently, in terms of domestic space, the very idea of meeting present and future needs is disqualified by a rapid obsolescence of inhabited spaces. In order to respond to this phenomenon, several architectural approaches can be explored.⁹

6.

Hertzberger, H. and van Vlijmen, M. (2001), *Lessons for Students in Architecture*, Rotterdam: 010 Publishers.

7.

Schneider, F. (2007) *Recueil de plans d'habitation*, Berlin: Birkhäuser.

8.

In their essay about obsolescence, Thomson and Van der Flier distinguish physical opposed to behavioural factors. Thomsen, A. and van der Flier, K. (2011) 'Understanding obsolescence: a conceptual model for buildings', *Building Research & Information*, 39(4), 352-362.

9.

Ledent, G. (2016) 'Beyond contingency. Sustainable design versus obsolescence' in Cairns, G., ed. *AMPS Proceedings Series 4, Obsolescence and Renovation – 20th century Housing in the New Millennium*, Seville: Universidad de Sevilla.

First, some architects address variations of the triad in a monovalent way. Some advocate buildings that can adapt over time to the changing habits of their users. This flexibility of uses is achieved through adaptable, transformable or indeterminate architecture, as opposed to the tight-fit spaces of functionalism.¹⁰ Others seek a solution to obsolescence in structural, energetic innovation or servicing systems. Whether soft or hard, these strategies lead primarily to technological buildings. For example, sustainable architecture as it is commonly understood is no exception to this monovalent logic since it is primarily a technological answer to the question of building obsolescence. A final option concentrates on reducing any kind of aesthetic codes to their core. The formal aspect of architecture is thus condensed to a minimal standard expression. But none of these approaches provides a comprehensive response to the issue of obsolescence.

Second, some architects consider spatial obsolescence a given which is inseparable from our built environment and, by extension, from architecture itself. According to an economic logic, many buildings are conceived with a life expectancy of no more than 25 years.¹¹ In this sense, architecture becomes a throwaway product, precluding any possible sustainable development. In reflecting on *La Défense* in Paris, Rem Koolhaas emphasized this position when he professed that 'modern' buildings could expire and be removed within a single generation.¹² According to this principle, the very existence of a building is precarious, allowing no notion whatsoever of permanence. Architecture is thus a '*tabula rasa... in waiting*'.¹³

10.

Till, J. and Schneider, T. (2005)
'Flexible housing: the means to the end', *Arg : Architectural Research Quarterly*, 9(3-4), 287-296.

11.

Brand, S. (1995) *How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They're Built*, New York: Penguin Publishing Group.

12.

'The modern building has become the momentary embodiment of an opportunistic financial envelope that after 20, 25, at the most 30 years, simply expires, all within a single generation. Modern buildings is literally written off.' Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., Sigler, J., Werlemann, H. and Architecture, O. f. M. (1997) *S, M, L, XL*, New York: Monacelli Press. p. 1128.

13.

Ibid., p. 1132.

Eventually, a third path towards sustainability infers a paradigm shift in design strategies around the concept of polyvalence.¹⁴ The concept of polyvalence emerges as a reaction to the determinism of modernism in architecture. One of the features of modernist architecture is indeed a minute specification of space fitting precisely its designated functions. As Bernard Leupen stated, 'The more precisely we are able to determine the requirements a dwelling must satisfy as its inception, the greater the chance that a discrepancy arises between the dwelling and its uses in the future'.¹⁵ Thus if specificity does indeed lead to less expensive buildings, they are usually short-lived. To counteract this obsolescence of uses, several adaptive strategies are possible: by enlarging space, through altering space or through enabling from the start multiple uses without any spatial modification. Polyvalence refers to this third strategy.

Herman Hertzberger further clarifies this concept by making a clear distinction between generic and polyvalent space, comparing them to the notions of competence and performance developed by Noam Chomsky. According to him, generic space is achieved by retrieving qualities in order to produce a neutral space. The term 'genericness' describes thus a passive quality. Polyvalence, on the other hand, refers to an active character of space regarding functional adaptability. '*The idea of polyvalence is to design in such a way as to actively induce interpretation*'.¹⁶ Instead of providing neutral space, the key to polyvalence is to provide suitable space.

While Leupen and Hertzberger refer to polyvalence according to its ability to shelter the interchangeability of functions, the concept could be broadened to all three

14.

Leupen, B. (2006b)
'Polyvalence, a concept for the sustainable dwelling', *Nordic Journal of Architectural Research*, 19(3), 23-31.

15.

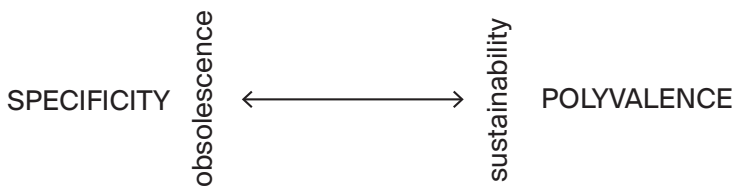
Leupen, B. (2006a)
Frame and Generic Space, Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, p. 18.

16.

Hertzberger, H. (2015) *Architecture and Structuralism: The Ordering of Space*, Rotterdam: 010 Publisher, p. 140.
Hertzberger, H. and van Vlijmen, M. (2001) *Lessons for Students in Architecture*, Rotterdam: 010 Publishers.

aspects of the Vitruvian triad. Indeed, as Brundtland advocates meeting present and future needs, architecture defines these needs in three ways: functional, structural and formal. Hence, polyvalence could be a quality of space that allows for simultaneous technological, aesthetic and functional adaptation (either in time or through personal interpretation).

Accordingly, the concept of polyvalence seems to be capable of providing a comprehensive solution to sustainability from a spatial point of view. Indeed, as it allows variations on all three Vitruvian principles, polyvalence produces perennial spaces able to meet present and future needs.¹⁷ At the other end of the spectrum, specificity generates spaces that are extremely vulnerable to change.



Sustainability from a social point of view

The Brundtland definition could also lead to a social interpretation. The centre of attention would then shift to articulating the needs of some (our contemporaries) and the abilities of others (future generations) in a world which is by definition limited. In other words, the problem is now to describe and understand how the fulfilment of some would not restrict that of others but on the contrary contribute to it. Hence, sustainability creates an infinite variety of choices or lifestyles for current and future inhabitants.

17.

In the line of John Habraken, Stephen Kendall also advocates for such a posture of 'Open Buildings'. Kendall, S. (1999) 'Open Building: An Approach to Sustainable Architecture', *Journal of Urban Technology*, 6(3), 1-16.

In the case of dwelling, this interpretation has many spatial consequences but also various social implications. Some of these implications are made clear by a parallel to the Capability Approach developed by Sen. 'Capability' combines three dimensions: freedom of choice; desire-fulfilment goal; implementation possibility.¹⁸ This third dimension makes the approach original because it explores the link between the choices and values of an individual and the possibility (internal and external) of implementing them. Namely, what enables us to live the life we choose to live and what gives access to possible worlds? When the Capability Approach and the issue of sustainable dwelling are brought together, very concrete questions come to mind: How can a dwelling environment support basic human activities (such as eating, sleeping, washing, etc.)? How can a dwelling environment support important daily services? Such practical questions often lead to issues that are far more difficult to assess even though they are probably as important: How can a dwelling environment insure a feeling of personal security and integrity? How can a dwelling environment preserve one's privacy as well as produce enriching neighbourly relations (from a functional, intellectual or affective point of view)? Instead of focusing on precise capabilities, this second range of questions focuses on the levers provided by housing. Therefore, if the dwelling leads, indirectly, to opportunities in employment, social activities (sport, culture, etc.), the creation of new projects and initiatives, then it can be qualified as 'empowering'. Even if the literature about empowerment is based much more upon a critical view of the domination system,¹⁹ the possibility of enhancement is quite similar to that of the Capability Approach, which is conceived in a dynamic way. In this sense to dwell is therefore much more than to be housed. Thus, to sum up, from a social

18.

De Munck, J. (2008) 'Qu'est-ce qu'une capacité ?' in Jean, D. M. and Bénédicte, Z., eds., *La liberté au prisme des capacités. Amartya Sen au-delà du libéralisme*, Paris: Editions de l'EHESS, 21-49.

19.

Bacqué, M.-H. and Biewener, C. (2015) *L'empowerment, une pratique émancipatrice ?*, Paris : La Découverte.

point of view, the sustainable nature of a dwelling is inherent to the degree of empowerment it grants to present of future inhabitants.²⁰

A clarification should be added to the provision of empowerment: it can only be considered if it is articulated in accordance with a logic of interdependences between capacities. Therefore, the interdependence between individuals, social groups and generations should be recognized as a prerequisite, as suggested by *care* theorists. According to Joan Tronto and Berenice Fisher, *care* is: 'a species of activity that includes everything we do to maintain, contain, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment'.²¹ Hence, the liberal nature of the Capacity Approach cannot rely on the concept of an inhabitant with no social links but rather must rely on the concept of an inhabitant who is fundamentally inscribed in a socio-spatial network that enables him or her to exist.²² Whatever view we may have of the individual and the social and the spatial aspects of living, there remains the issue of how people represent their individualities and their socio-spatial relationships. Consequently, if from a sociological point of view, sustainability can be linked to the notion of empowerment, it fundamentally disputes social configurations that grant no particular meaning to individual freedom or interdependence between individuals. Such configurations, whether explicitly formulated or not, tend to maintain individuals in their social role/position (symbolically and materially).²³

20.

This notion of empowerment can be likened to the '*droit à la ville*' developed by Henri Lefebvre in the 1960s. Lefebvre, H. (1968) *Le droit à la Ville*, Lonrai: Anthropos.

21.

Tronto, J. and Fisher, B. (1990) 'Toward a feminist theory of caring' in Abel, E. K. and Nelson, M. K., eds., *Circles of care: work and identity in women's lives*, Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 36–54. See more fundamentally: Tronto, J. C. (1993) *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*, Routledge.

22.

In this respect, the reinterpretation of the sociological approach of Elias by Danilo Martuccelli is particularly interesting. Martuccelli, D. (2002) *Grammaires de l'individu*, Paris: Gallimard and Martuccelli, D. (2010) *La société singulariste*, Paris : Armand Colin.

23.

Numerous examples illustrate this standpoint. When discussing Sen's approach, Nussbaum exemplifies the living conditions of disabled people or single parents and whether or not this condition is the primal determination of the individuals. Nussbaum, M. (2001) *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Accordingly, inhabitants' empowerment is essential to producing sustainability from a social perspective. Moreover, empowerment is in essence opposed to the idea of role reduction that can be summed up in the concept of determinism.



Residential sustainability at the crossroads of socio-spatial approaches

The soaring population and social discrepancies around the world draw increasing attention to the issue of sound, respectful and safe residential spaces that go beyond housing and that could be called home. In addition, due to the limited resources of the earth, sustainability also becomes a key issue when addressing housing. It is against this twofold backdrop that the ‘Sustainable Dwelling’ project has been developed.

The paradigm of sustainability was forged on the ashes of the modernist ideology.²⁴ The failure of its aftermath is due to two main factors. First, post-war interpretations of modernism in architecture led to technically or economically driven solutions. Many of the housing solutions proved too rigid to pass the test of time. In addition, modernist functionalism literally muted the sense of meaning for its actual users.²⁵ Lifestyle

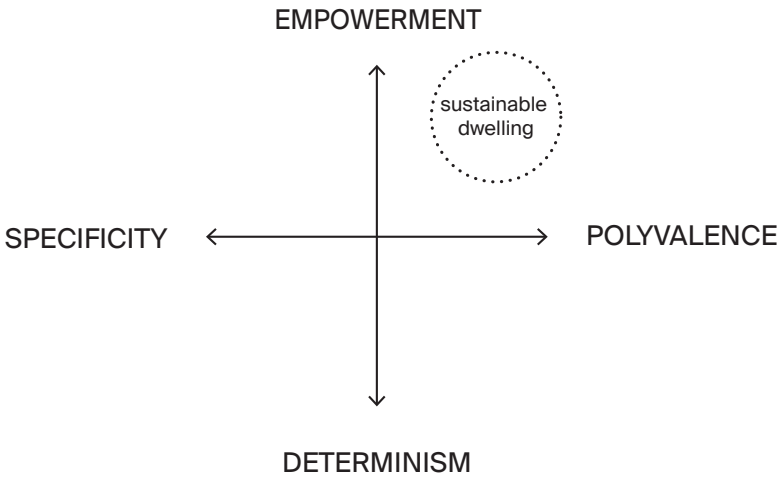
24. In their 2014 paper, Heynen and Vandevyvere challenge this antagonism, yet refer to the sustainable discourse as mainly an ecological one. Vandevyvere, H. and Heynen, H. (2014) ‘Sustainable Development, Architecture and Modernism: Aspects of an Ongoing Controversy’, *arts*, 3, 350-366.

25. Even though the 1953 CIAM introduced qualitative methods to understand the built environment. Pinson, D. (2006) ‘De l’échec d’une charte à la poursuite d’une réflexion’ in (Imbernon, ed., *La Modernité critique, autour du CIAM 9 d’Aix-en-Provence, 1953*, Marseille: 241-257.) On this topic, the sociological analysis carried out by Chamboredon and Lemaire remains a prominent reference. Chamboredon, J. C. and Lemaire, M. (1970) ‘Proximité spatiale et distance sociale. Les grands ensembles et leur peuplement’, *Revue française de sociologie*, 11(1), 3-33.

choices were limited both from an individual and collective perspective. Modernist housing often failed to act as the fabric for social practices and as a means of providing the dweller with diverse opportunities in life. On the basis of these two important shortcomings, it seems appropriate to question sustainability from a spatial and a user perspective.

From a spatial perspective, sustainable artefacts are those which avoid obsolescence. This can be achieved by producing polyvalent artefacts from a technical, functional or aesthetic point of view. From a social – user – perspective, sustainable interactions are those capable of empowering individuals or groups while recognizing their interdependences.

While the first approach opposes polyvalence and specificity, the second opposes empowerment and determinism. Combining both approaches leads to a delineation of sustainability in the simultaneous occurrence of polyvalence and empowerment.



To enhance this comprehensive approach of sustainability, an interdisciplinary methodology is set up, combining two disciplines: architecture and sociology. Such multidisciplinary research has been advocated in the past, as it offers a deeper understanding of the concept of home by tackling and interconnecting more relevant data.²⁶ The first interdisciplinary analyses emerged as a result of failing modernist housing conceptions. It is no coincidence that the first transdisciplinary studies were carried out in France, in view of its large-scale housing production – *les grands ensembles* – led by Henri Raymond and Henri Lefebvre, and inspired by the ethnological works of Claude Levi-Strauss and Marcel Mauss. Others, such as Amos Rapoport and several architects emerging from the 1953 CIAM (Aldo Van Eyck and Hassan Fathy²⁷), came to the same conclusion: space and, by extension, housing cannot be studied unilaterally.²⁸

While, traditionally, domestic architecture was an exploration of spatial configurations that encompass three dimensions – formal, functional and structural – it became obvious that the notion of dwelling involves a series of complex relationships between sociocultural factors and their spatial arrangements.²⁹ In addition, research findings indicate that time is also an important factor, as the '*relationship between habitat and inhabitants*

26.

Kent, S. (1993) *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An Interdisciplinary Cross-Cultural Study*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press ; Low, S. M. and Lawrence-Zúñiga, D. (2003) *The anthropology of space and place: locating culture*, London: Blackwell ; Gieryn, T. F. (2000) 'A Space for Place in Sociology', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 463-496.

27.

Pinson, D. (1993) *Usage et architecture*, Paris: Editions L'Harmattan.

28.

Rapoport, A. (1969) *House form and culture, Foundations of Cultural Geography Series*, Englewood Cliff: Prentice-Hall ; Lefebvre, H. (1974) *La production de l'espace, Ethnosociologies*, 4 ed., Mayenne: Anthropos ; Haumont, N. and Raymond, H. (1971) *L'habitat pavillonnaire*, Paris: Centre de recherche d'urbanisme ; Bourdieu, P. (1972) *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique: précédé de Trois études d'ethnologie kabyle*, Paris: Seuil.

29.

Rapoport, A. (1969) *House form and culture, Foundations of Cultural Geography Series*, Englewood Cliff: Prentice-Hall.

is *dynamic or changeable*'.³⁰ Eventually, the concept of the individual dweller and his/her potential appropriations of space became a key notion when linking spatial and social housing studies.³¹ Altogether, these pioneering studies urged scholars to link humanities and architecture in both architectural education and research. Combining both disciplines led to replacing the notion of spatial efficiency with that of resilience-engendering social diversity.

Sustainability is thus seen from this comprehensive perspective, which regards housing as more than just a spatial or technological issue. In addition, this understanding of sustainability implies a fundamental transformation from a utilitarian vision of space to a user-oriented consideration of space,³² replacing the concept of utility with that of use. In this respect, bridging architectural and sociological research could contribute to a better understanding of the relationships between uses and spaces.

30.

Lawrence, R. J. (1983) 'The comparative analyses of homes: Research method and application', *Social Science Information/sur les sciences sociales*, 22(3), 461-485 ; Altman, I. and Werner, C. (2013) *Home Environments*, New York: Springer US.

31.

Serfaty-Garzon, P. (2003) 'Appropriation' in Brun, J., Driant, J.-C. and Segaud, M., eds., *Dictionnaire critique de l'habitat et du logement*, Paris: Armand colin, 27-30 ; Haumont, N. and Raymond, H. (1971) *L'habitat pavillonnaire*, Paris: Centre de recherche d'urbanisme.

32.

Cuppers, K. (2013) *Use Matters: An Alternative History of Architecture*, London: Taylor & Francis.

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Utopian pragmatism

Grass-roots urban movements rejuvenating the Swiss housing cooperative tradition

Andreas Hofer

The cooperative spirit is deeply rooted in Swiss culture. It has long been a means to address collective challenges such as the harsh agrarian conditions of the mountains and the changing economy of the industrial revolution. At the turn of the 20th century, cooperatives were relied on to solve the urban housing crisis; they became well-established throughout Switzerland before declining in the 1960s.

In 1980s Zurich, after right-wing policies had depleted the city's budget, resulting once again in inadequate housing, housing cooperatives were rejuvenated by grass-roots groups that had emerged from the *right to the city movement*, generating a new housing dynamic. Linking new utopian ideals to the tradition of the cooperatives, innovative experiments were launched, including Kraftwerk1, which offered radical changes. Set on an old brownfield site, it combined a large variety of housing arrangements in order to shelter residents who reflected the city's diversity.

Nowadays, this double lineage – citizen activism and cooperative tradition – ensures, through participation, a high level of citizen empowerment and spatial inventiveness that makes it possible to the needs of a diverse and evolving society.

Recent decades have seen a renewed interest in Zurich and the housing experiences that grew out of the combination of the cooperative movement and grassroots initiatives willing to fight for a decent quality of life for everyone in the city - the *right to the city*.¹ Housing cooperatives, which were embedded in the tradition of the city, and Switzerland in general, were losing momentum by the end of the 1960s. They were invigorated by citizens' movements in the 1980s, after the city's budget was depleted by right-wing policies. Housing shortage and inadequacy had become a crucial issue.

Cooperatives

Genesis of the cooperative movement

The official name of Switzerland, '*Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft*', contains the word 'cooperative' in combination with 'oath'. This emphasizes the self-conception that the nation is founded on the free will of its citizens (then only men) to bridge cultural and language differences. The territory has no geographic logic, no kings, no ethnic homogeneity. These somehow mythical and historically euphemistic roots found very pragmatic organisational forms in an alpine rural society. Agrarian cooperation was a means to survive harsh conditions, arrange transhumance, and distribute meat and cheese in autumn.

After the foundation of the modern nation state in 1848 and a rapid and extensive industrialisation in the second half of the 19th century, the agrarian cooperative model turned out to be adaptable enough to provide basic needs for an urbanizing society. Food coops, cooperative banks and housing cooperatives were founded. To this day, the two biggest retail businesses (Coop and Migros) are cooperatives with millions of members.

Housing cooperatives

In the 19th century, pressing housing shortages led to political initiatives and laws. In Zurich, a 1907 referendum forced the city to provide 'sound and cheap

1.

The *right to the city* movement was a call by Henri Lefebvre, advocating the right of citizens to use the city as a common good. Lefebvre, H. (1968) *Le droit à la Ville*, Lonrai: Anthropos.

housing' (*gesunde und billige Wohnungen*).² After some communal housing projects were built, the cooperative model, once again, took over. First, they were occupational cooperatives (railway workers, civil servants, etc.), then the general housing cooperative (*Allgemeine Baugenossenschaft Zürich, ABZ*) was founded in 1916.

The Swiss model of social and affordable housing provision was developed in the 1920s along two axes that still apply today. On the one hand, the local state builds mostly the city's infrastructures and subsidized social housing for the people in real need (today about 6% of Zurich's rental housing stock³). On the other hand, with organisational help and support but few direct subsidies, the lower middle-classes are invited to establish and organize themselves in cooperatives.

The second incorporation of poor villages around Zurich in 1934 provided the land for an impressive growth of the cooperative housing stock in huge garden-city-like estates. Nowadays, more than 120 cooperatives own 20% of Zurich's rental housing stock. These cooperatives possess 300 housing units on average (125 cooperatives for a total of 40,000 units), while the largest one possesses 5,000. Altogether, 25% of Zurich's housing stock belongs to non-for-profit organisations (cooperatives along with charitable foundations and the city's own stock).

The functioning of such cooperatives is simple. To become part of a housing cooperative, a member needs to buy a share. The member is then entitled to vote (one person, one vote) and has the right to rent an apartment. These diverse democratic tenant cooperatives turn out to be invaluable in a housing market that is driven by speculation and threatened by the conversion of housing into office space. Moreover, the philosophy behind them is based on the fact that buildings have longer lifespans than humans. Hence, most building investments are made over a 90-year period.

2.
Peter, J. (1950) 'Housing Policy in Zurich', *Annals of public and cooperative economics*, 21(4), 323-329.

3.
In Zurich, 90% of the people are renters.

Housing rents are then calculated according to the actual costs of the cooperatives. Any surplus generated must be reinvested in the cooperative. This approach allows for lower rents than in private tenures (20-30% lower than the market's⁴).

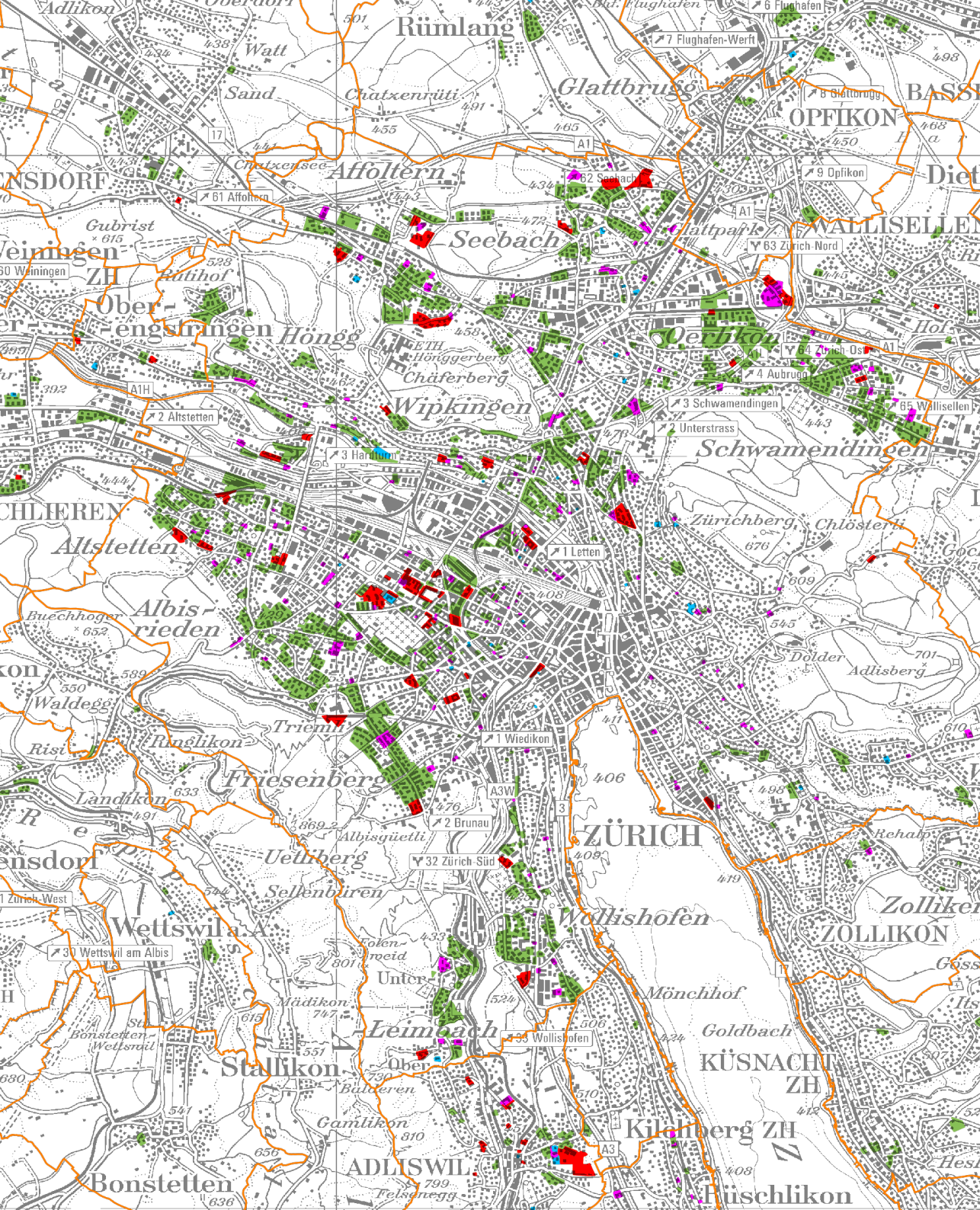
The city of Zurich itself supports rather than subsidises housing cooperatives through various means. First, the city helps the cooperatives access bank loans from its pension funds. Second, the city makes sure that rules for public interest are enforced and respected scrupulously. Third, when a municipal property is sold, it must first be presented to the cooperatives. Since 50 years it's not selling but providing with a long term land lease: the authorities can grant the cooperatives a surface right by which they have free use of the land for a term of about 90 years. However, in return, cooperatives have several obligations: organizing an architecture competition, building according to high ecological standards, incorporating art, providing service spaces for the neighbourhood and a certain amount of social housing.⁵

Based on these principles, housing production by cooperatives thrived in the 1920s and 1930s and persisted until the late 1960s. It was mainly based on a Fordist model clearly disconnecting housing from work, just as it was advocated by modernism. Women stayed at home to raise the children in low-density developments built amongst greenery while men worked in factories set in other parts of town. Housing was highly standardized and provided modest comfort and amenities for all. Such settlements were built on a shared consensus. Thousands were erected in Zurich, millions in Europe. They engendered social homogeneity and no functional mix in cities.

This production, relying on the cooperatives' long tradition of solidarity, was able to meet housing demand for years and literally created a green belt around Zurich. However,

4.
Boudet, D. (2017) *Nouveaux logements à Zurich: La renaissance des coopératives d'habitat*, Zurich: Park Books, p. 245.

5.
Ibid.



Cooperatives



Municipality
of Zurich



Philanthropic
Foundations

Shares of housing from cooperatives or public funders
(source: editors)

this model, which spread throughout post-war Switzerland, completely evaporated in the late 1960s. From then on, cooperatives ceased to produce any housing.

Crisis

Antagonisms

In the deindustrialization and mass mobilization processes of the 1970s and 1980s, Zurich and the cooperatives fell into a deep crisis. The city itself lost nearly 20% of its inhabitants.

Many people started to turn their back on the city. Like in most Western cities, the upper middle class fled to rural areas to seek their self-determined happiness in family homes in the countryside. New initiatives arose in these rural areas, some based on the modernist tradition of the Halen Estate,⁶ others taking the opposite view in line with Team Ten and Herman Hertzberger.⁷ This led to a genuine anti-urban process, generating a large-scale housing sprawl on the Swiss plateau.

In the meantime, within the city itself, the financial sector thrived, creating growth and employment. But, while Zurich was losing inhabitants, the construction industry, backed up by a conservative administration, steadily erected new service buildings, even converting residential ones into offices in the former workers' districts.

Even though people were leaving the city, the housing shortage persisted and repressive laws and a leaden mentality paralysed public life. Living in the city became for some tougher and tougher.

This dilemma – live in a safe rural area or face harsh city life – was at the centre of many debates in Zurich and across Europe. Two trends advocating for urban life emerged. They were remarkably visible in a city like Berlin. On the one hand, conservative and institutionalised

6.

Examples of this trend include the projects developed by Leu in the Zurich Oberland (1970s and 1980s), the 'Höll' in Scherz by Vogt, Benno and Fosco-Oppenheim (1970–1976), the 'Im Spitz' in Wasterkingen by Stamm (1978), and the 'Zelgli' in Windisch by Metron (1981).

7.

In this vein, we could classify the work of Ralph and Doris Thut and Otto Steidle or more generally what has been done in southern Germany and in the Austrian province of Vorarlberg.



The Schwamendingen neighbourhood in the 1950s
(source: Baugeschichtliches Archiv Zürich)

action called for a critical reconstruction of the city. It was embodied in the IBA1987 led by Paul Kleihues. On the other hand, grassroots initiatives sprang up, fighting for the preservation of a roughshod urbanity. The Kreuzberg district became the symbol of this trend, where members of an alternative scene squatted empty buildings and revitalized the entire neighbourhood. In Zurich, vehement rebellions took place amongst the local youth. Building occupations, demonstrations, etc., promoted the advent of new forms of urban life. However, this movement was shattered in the early 1980s when a strong conservative majority came into office.

The right to the city movement

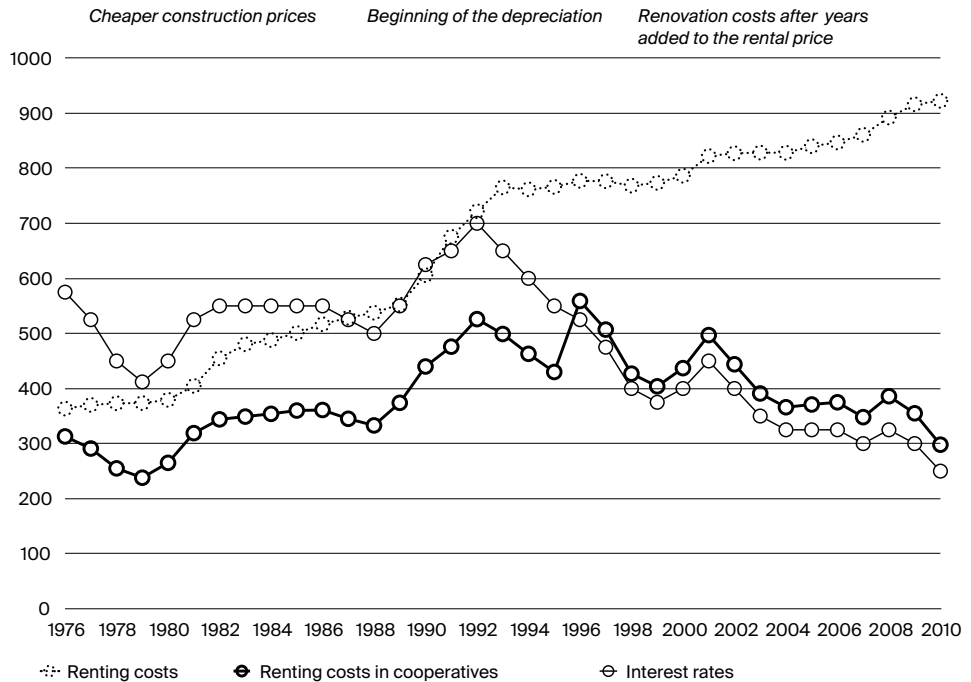
After a while, more serene prospects regarding cities developed. In Amsterdam, for instance, liberal authorities allowed squatting as a democratic process of appropriation and a means of planting the germ cell of creative industry. In Zurich, a turning point occurred in 1986 with a dramatic shift when a progressive administration replaced the conservative one. Ursula Koch of the Social Democratic party became the head of the *Hochbaudepartment*, in charge of all building construction works in the city (zoning plans, building laws and building permissions).

Regarding building activity, she literally revolutionized her position: introducing reliable procedures, revising the zoning ordinance, etc. In her famous speech '*Building in Zurich between Utopias and resignation*',⁸ she called for a better quality of life in Zurich. This included better planning for the former industrial zones (involving a mix between commercial and public facilities and residential spaces), housing at a moderate price, etc. She also called for respect for the yet built city and advocated for quality in its further development.

However, housing remained a problem. Real estate prices skyrocketed, inducing massive demonstrations from all levels of society. Housing policies and the *right to the city* were the talk of the town. In the early 1990s,

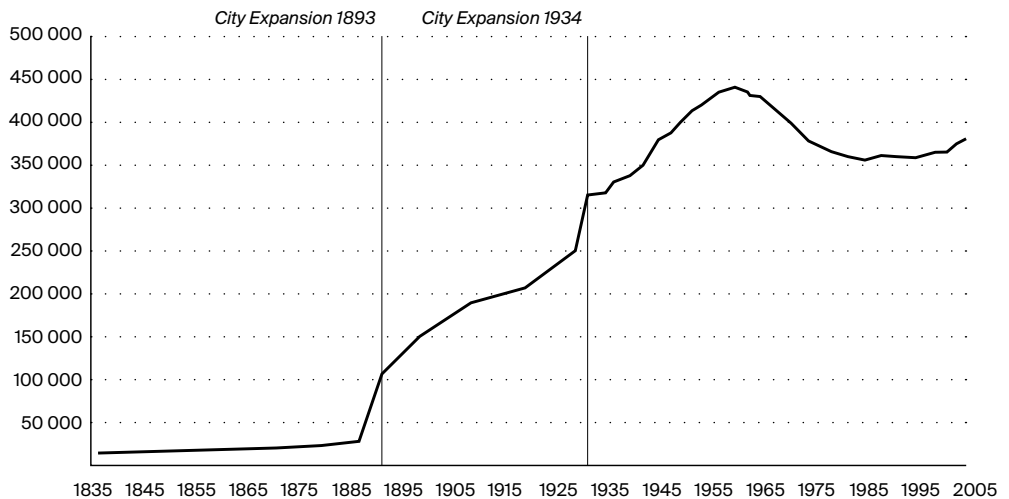
8.

Koch, U. (1988), 'Building in Zurich between Utopias and resignation'. Speech at the general meeting of the SIA, Zurich: Typescript.



↑
Rental price developments. Renting costs on the free market are average renting costs in Zurich, the renting costs in cooperatives are a theorized model based on the typical rent calculation of a cooperative.
(source: author)

↓
Population evolution in Zurich
(source: Bevölkerungsentwicklung der Stadt Zürich zwischen 1836 erste Schweizerische Volkszählung und 2009). Nach Daten der Schweizerischen Volkszählung, eidgenössische Volkszählung, Statistik Stadt Zürich).



the market virtually imploded,⁹ leaving Zurich in a serious crisis: its population had shrunk dramatically, to the level of 1945,¹⁰ and a commonly invoked trope had it that the only people left in the city were foreigners, alcoholics, old people, unemployed people, trainees, and the poor (die A-Stadt: ausländier, alkoholiker, alte, arbeitslose, auszubildende, arme).

'Gegen die Wohnungsnot: Genossenschaften'¹¹

While debates swirled in the political sphere, grassroots initiatives took the housing issue into their own hands. Citizens became aware that one way to fight private developers and speculation was to buy or create housing themselves. As in the housing crisis years of the early 20th century, these proactive initiatives reactivated the principles of the housing cooperatives which offered leverage and provided a suitable legal form. This way, the cooperative tradition as a means to create quality housing in the city was resurrected. Several new cooperatives were founded in the 1980s. *Wogeno* built self-managed houses. The PWG foundation emerged from a referendum to create affordable residential and business spaces in endangered buildings. *Karthago* developed from a squatting tradition and managed to set up a collective project after a series of vicissitudes (a squatting incident, wrestling with right-wing authorities, etc.). Another group of city activists fought the authorities in order to create the *Dreieck* project in the same neighbourhood.

Finding new strategies for dealing with post-modern society became the main objective of both activists and the cooperative movement. Three key issues were explored: social inclusion, connectivity and technical sustainability. It also acknowledged the fact that lifestyles had changed dramatically ever since the immediate post-war period. Indeed, the traditional family – a couple

9. Schmid, S. (24 June 2014) 'Das böse Erwachen', *Tages Anzeiger*.

10. Statistik Zürich, see figure p.027.

11. 'Against the housing shortage: the cooperatives', such signs were put up on the second housing development initiated by Kraftwerk 1, Didelon, V. (2013) 'Kraftwerk, vers un nouvel âge de la coopération', *Criticat*, 11, 2-11.



Protest on behalf of the *Roten Fabrik*
(source: Gertrud Vogler)

with children – is a stage in life that lasts for about 20 years. Before and after that, things can be very different, reflecting the ‘fluidity’ of the post-modernist lifestyle.

Nowadays, to address these contemporary issues, the new housing cooperatives are based on a pivotal principle: participation. Their motto is ‘do, develop, participate, share’, in order to create a rich and self-managed life. Group dynamics are essential, since ‘*when we dream alone it is only a dream, but when many dream together it is the beginning of a new reality*’.¹² In addition, years of discussion have illustrated a recurring feature of grass-roots democratic planning: participation as the unweighted sum of individual interests is destructive. Hence, complex discursive formats need to be thought of to forge individual dreams into a more general collective interest.

Participation is the acknowledgement that no expert or specialist has a monopoly on solutions. Which does not mean that experts do not deserve respect; they do, after all, have specific knowledge of their fields. But participation can hardly be far enough removed from particularist interests. Discussing collectively the city and new residential forms – not individual dream homes, not just residences – is the goal.

In this respect, projects must have a certain size if they are to change the city or the district and attain an interior complexity that enables various forms of appropriation and development (such as gardens, district infrastructure, residential and working spaces). Of particular importance is the creative use of ground floor spaces. In the matter, economy is always understood in its original sense: housekeeping. This includes the circumspect, expedient use of material and immaterial resources, energy and involvement. Many are prevented from participating in our discussions since they have their hands full getting residence permits, making a living, and looking after their children. But, although they do not speak our language, they should still be part of our projects.¹³

12.

P.M. (1983) *Bolo'bolo*, Paris: Editions de l'Éclat.

13.

Ruby, I. and Kries, M. (2017) *Together! the New Architecture of the Collective*, Berlin: Vitra Design Museum GmbH.

In addition to this citizen activism, the *Konzeptgruppe Städtebau*¹⁴ group, bringing together geographers, architects and planners, soon played a determining role. It brought the debates to the analytical level by organizing seminars and reflecting both on ongoing urban processes and strategies to respond to the housing shortage. At an international level, it ultimately founded the International Network for Urban Research and Action (INURA) in 1991.

Kraftwerk1, from utopia to reality

Utopia

In 1992, the *Konzeptgruppe Städtebau* entrusted Martin Blum, the author P.M. and myself with the launching of a proactive project. For us, it was an opportunity to renounce an adversarial and antagonistic position and propose new models for society.

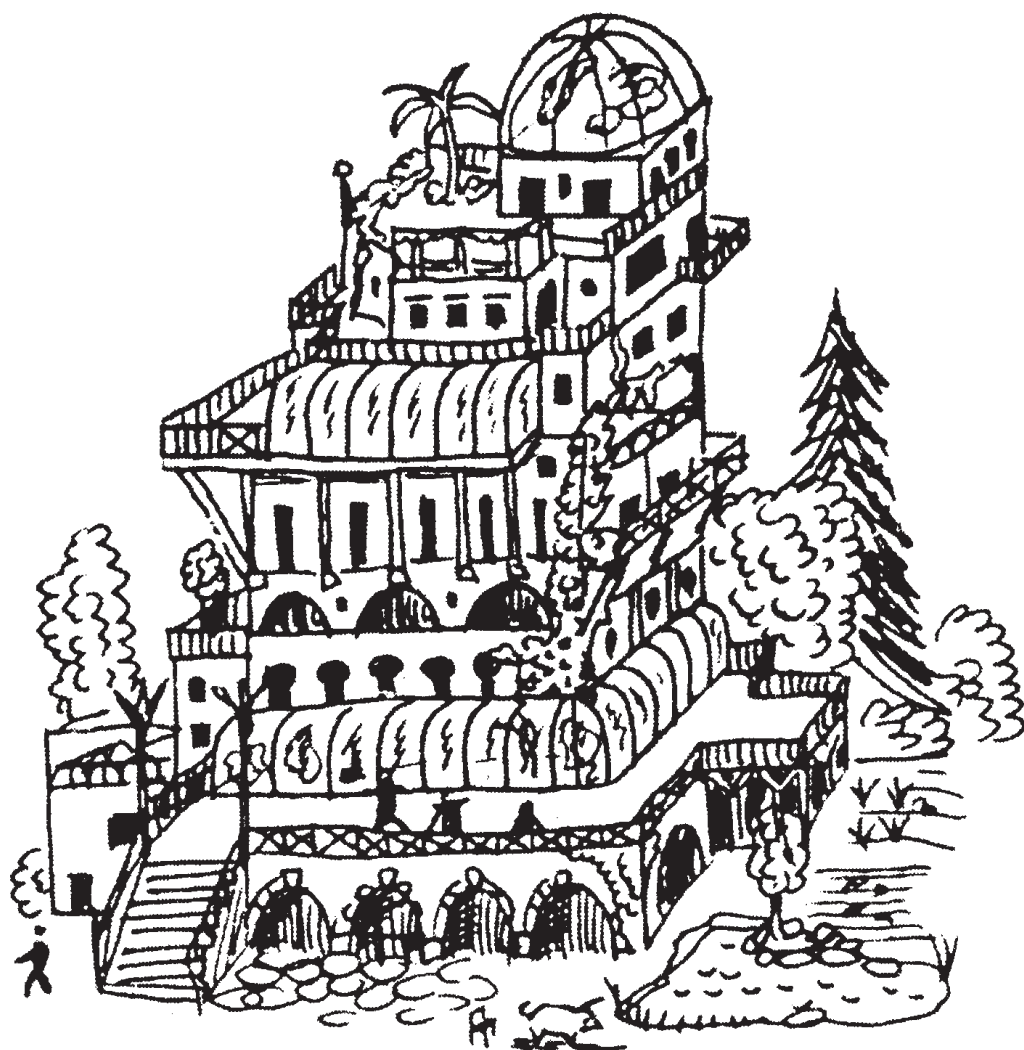
This is how Kraftwerk1 began. It was not a complete project at the beginning; it started off in 1993 with the publication of a small book, *Kraftwerk1 – Projekt für das Sulzer Escher Wyss Areal*,¹⁵ with a print run of 700 copies which was the proposed size of the project. It presented a mixture of urban history, the specific project, and the promise of housing. Each book contained a subscription offer. Hundreds of people seized the opportunity. In the late summer of 1993, the authors invited all interested parties and founded an *ad hoc* association to promote the project. Lacking land and money, the only recourse was communication and action. Ursula Koch got in touch with us, and the owners of the Escher Wyss site – which we had unilaterally made the centre of the proceedings – followed suit not long afterwards. The result was *KraftWerkSommer 94*, a series of concerts, readings, and panel discussions on urban development spanning several weeks and taking place in a vacant industrial building. Kraftwerk1 was an art project, an event, a happening, but not yet a construction project. We played in the art galleries of Europe, shivered

14.

The group was founded in 1988.

15.

Blum, M., Hofer, A. and P.M. (1993) *Kraftwerk1 : Projekt für das Sulzer-Escher Wyss*, Zurich: Areal.



in the chilly temporary quarters of the Architekturzentrum in Vienna, and reprised *KraftWerkSommer* in the Rote Fabrik in 1995. Dietmar Hoffmann Axthelm and Yona Friedmann came. It was a Utopian summer.¹⁶

Martin Blum, the author P.M., and myself aimed to establish a new community in order to try out new ways of living and working. Inspiration was sought from alternatives worlds in architectural history. Not all architects had blindly surrendered to the constraints of capitalism and celebrated the dictatorship of mechanisation and the Fordist division of the spheres of life. Even in the 19th century many alternative movements were working on a different vision of modernity, such as early socialist communities in America¹⁷ and the Familistère in Guise, France. In the early 20th century, the young Soviet Union radically questioned social conditions¹⁸ and experimented with its emblematic Narkomfin building.¹⁹ In the 21st century, there is the *Torre David* experiments. But it was the *phalanstère* developed by Fourier that exerted a determining influence on P.M.'s proposal in a 1985 essay for a self-sufficient settlement in Bolo' Bolo.²⁰ In this proposal, P.M. acknowledges the end of the traditional predominance of the married-with-two-kids household and puts forward autonomous communities of 500 persons.

Reality

The KraftWerkSommer 94 and 95 culminated in 1995 in the Rote Fabrik in the founding of the Kraftwerk1 building and residential cooperative. The ongoing crisis opened a historic window of opportunity. For the first time,

16.

Ruby, I. and Kries, M. (2017) *Together! the New Architecture of the Collective*, Berlin: Vitra Design Museum GmbH.

17.

Such as the production cooperative founded in 1825 by the British philanthropist Robert Owen in New Harmony, Indiana, USA.

18.

Ruby, I. and Kries, M. (2017) *Together! the New Architecture of the Collective*, Berlin: Vitra Design Museum GmbH.

19.

It is no coincidence that Andreas Hofer made a trip to Moscow as an architecture student (editors' note).

20.

P.M. (1983) *Bolo'bolo*, Paris: Editions de l'Éclat.

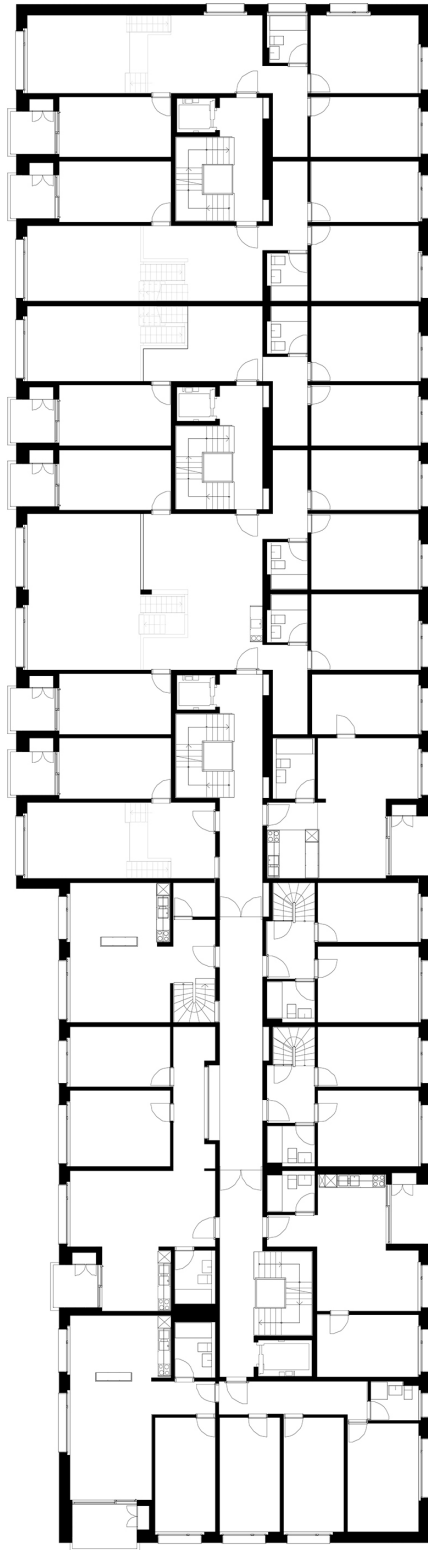
we were able to apply our principles in the development of the Hardturmstrasse housing complex of the Kraftwerk1 cooperative. Oerlikon Bührle, a corporation that had dealt with a squatter problem on the Wohlgroth site, offered the young cooperative a property on an industrial wasteland. The established architecture firm of Stücheli called in the young team of Bünzli and Courvoisier and developed the plans together with Kraftwerk1 and Oerlikon Bührle. As trust grew, the challenges of planning and funding a project worth CHF50 million were solved, and in 2001, 350 people moved into the residential and commercial spaces of the development. The planning and construction process ran parallel to open, broad-based discussions in working groups, where the residential and work concepts, ecological construction methods, and leasing and financing models were developed.²¹

From an architectural point of view, the main housing building displays a series of innovations. First, it is one of the first buildings designed according to low-energy standards (Minergie). Innovative technologies can be found throughout the building, ranging from solar panels to heat pump laundry driers. Second, a great variety of dwelling typologies are created to mirror society's diversity of lifestyles and households. Among the 81 apartments, no fewer than 11 different typologies are created, ranging from the conventional family apartments to atelier-apartments and large co-living units of 11 bedrooms arranged around communal living rooms. The intention was not to replace the conventional family apartments (which represents only 16% of the households in Zurich), but to complement them with new ones for other phases of life or different lifestyles (in Zurich, 50% of households are single). These typologies were inspired by paradigmatic examples from the history of architecture: duplex and triplex apartments developed by Le Corbusier and Loos.

This spatial diversity is supplemented by various agreements made by the cooperative with a series of foundations. Through these foundations (Altried, Domizil,

21.

Ruby, I. and Kries, M. (2017) *Together! the New Architecture of the Collective*, Berlin: Vitra Design Museum GmbH.



Third floor with the 11-room 'Loos' apartment typology in the upper half of the building and 'Le Corbusier' in the lower half (source: Stücheli Architekten)

etc.), apartments are rented out to refugees, handicapped people or low-income residents. Those foundations also provide mediation services to those tenants.

In addition to the wide variety of apartments, a series of services are offered in the building, either for direct use by dwellers or for the neighbourhood itself. On the upper floor, a communal room gives direct access to a rooftop terrace, while on the ground floor a laundry and a bar are accessible to residents.

Parallel to these internal amenities, specific commercial spaces are available to the public such as a community grocery store and a hairdresser's salon. Some spaces are also provided for public institutions such as a childcare facility and a playground. Moreover, among the estate's other buildings is a neighbourhood restaurant, where residents can mingle with the outside world.

Nowadays, the settlement houses 250 residents and 100 workers. In line with the initial motivation of the cooperative, there is a wide variety of people (families: 31%, couples: 16%, singles: 25%, co-living: 28%).

Since the early 1990s, the project has evolved from its utopian ambition to create an autonomous community on the fringes of capitalist society. It is no remote island. However, the cooperative project is very successful: the apartments are comfortable and resident relationships are thriving.

New typologies for diversified ways of living

For over 15 years, Kraftwerk1 has demonstrated that major issues such as social inclusion, integrating migrants, sustainability and healthy consumption can find solutions at the local scale of housing. One of the key elements of Kraftwerk1's success is its response to society's diversification. The project allows a multiplicity of ways of life by creating spatial diversity and complexity.

In Heizenholz, one of projects developed later by Kraftwerk1, the large co-living apartments of the Hardturmstrasse were pushed the cutting-edge even



↑↑
The communal kitchen in the large apartments
(source: author)

↑
Cleaning of the grocery store on the ground floor
(source: Kathrin Simonett)

←
Outdoor spaces
(source: Chloé Salembier)

further with apartments of 330 m², creating a new typology: the 'cluster' apartment. In these large apartments, private entities with bedroom, bathroom and kitchenette are assembled around a communal living room. This innovative typology was reinterpreted in an inventive way, in the Hunziker Areal development,²² by Duplex Architekten via its 'cluster building'. Mirroring the plan of the development itself, the typical floor plans combine individual retreats and communal living spaces. Nowadays, in Kraftwerk's third housing development in Zwicky Süd, this concept is reflected in 430 m² co-living apartments.

Housing for the people

Today the housing crisis has been overcome and Zurich is growing rapidly. This renewal is partly due to the revitalisation of the ancient cooperative structures by proactive citizens' movements. Recently founded cooperatives have raised societal and environmental issues that are widely discussed and only partly adapted by traditional cooperatives. Zurich has become a laboratory of new housing typologies, sustainable building technologies and participative planning processes. In a 2011 referendum, 76% of voters chose to raise the share of housing of common interest (communal and cooperative housing) from 25% to 33% by 2050. Stimulated by this clear verdict, there is no doubt that the cooperative success story will go on, not only quantitatively but also in researching resilient structures for an ageing, post-industrial society and more sustainable forms of urban living. Given the proportion of this kind of housing in Zurich and the influence of the latest housing projects on other developers, the potential for shaping the city is enormous.

The new dynamic of housing cooperatives has shed light on new strategies both for development processes and for housing diversity. In terms of development processes, participation is essential. Since most Zurich

22.

This large development (2015) was created by *Mehr als Wohnen*, a cooperative founded for the centenary of the city's housing cooperatives by associating over 50 of Zurich's cooperatives. Hugentobler, M., Hofer, A. and Simmendinger, P. (2015) *More than Housing: Cooperative Planning - A Case Study in Zurich*, Basel: Birkhäuser.



Kraftwerk1's rooftop communal terrace
(source: Chloé Salembier)



Typical floor plan in Hunziker Areal cluster building,
Duplex Architekten, 2015
(source: Duplex Architekten)

cooperatives belong to their tenants, which means that grass-roots democracy is an integral component of their makeup, it was natural for them to move towards more far-reaching participatory processes. This aspect of the process literally empowers residents, enabling them to be an active part of their dwelling projects²³ and to gain genuine knowledge from their involvement.

In terms of housing typologies, the latest cooperative projects have proven to be very creative and to benefit from one another's latest experiences. Facing ever-evolving ways of life, cooperatives have opted for the creation of a large variety of housing types rather than housing modularity. New buildings can thus shelter multiple and changing lifestyles and household compositions. In addition to this spatial complexity, the flexibility of housing cooperative structures permits an even wider variety of uses (apartment exchanges, bedroom limitation depending on household composition, etc.) than do conventional tenures. Furthermore, housing cooperatives take their responsibility for city life in providing social and commercial infrastructure in the neighbourhoods. They overcome the Fordist separation of functions and become part of the local economy in providing work and co-work space and they engage in food production by relating to farms in the surroundings (community based agriculture) or by founding food coops.

Eventually, the proactive dynamic that resurrected the cooperative movement retained its identity, blending inventiveness and pragmatism. This is noticeable in the search for creative economical drivers but also in the minutest details of the projects. The latest reuse of temporary highway pedestrian bridges in the Zwicky Süd project is yet another testimony that the inventiveness of the activist spirit is not lost.

If these lessons, bringing together the utopian spirit of direct democracy and cooperative structures, can percolate throughout cities, then cities will belong to everyone.

²³.

Even the architectural juries are public and open to all cooperative members.

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Dwelling past the limits of housing

Housing facing the individualization of society, the cases of Kalkbreite and La Sécherie

Gérald Ledent, Chloé Salembier,
Damien Vanneste

In the context of our societies' increasing individualization, dwelling has developed into a largely personal pursuit. Hence, housing can no longer be considered exclusively from a traditional household perspective.

Given this context, a combined analysis – both spatial and social – of several housing projects was carried out by researchers in architecture and the humanities. Two projects – La Sécherie in Nantes and Kalkbreite in Zurich – were selected for their use of a particular conception principle: 'reduction and extension'. This principle implies organizing a dwelling between two poles: a reduced domestic nucleus and a series of additional spaces. Based on this principle, a multiplicity of dwelling configurations can be imagined. All are grounded in the idea that the act of residing could take place beyond the traditional limits of housing. Combined with a spatial analysis, a post-occupancy exploration was carried out in both projects, shedding light on the constraints but also the potential of the 'reduction and extension' principle.

The benefits of this 'reduction and extension' principle are twofold. First, dwelling can evolve given the constellation of possible housing configurations. Second, inhabitants are able to make their own dwelling choices. This combination of domestic polyvalence and dwellers' empowerment is a key to sustainable housing designs.

'In any household forms, only one aspect counts, that is, adjusting the relationship between an individual and other(s), and maybe the fact that this individual claims a growing attention, a consequence of individualization concerning our society (that is our western and industrial society). This aspect does not contradict the search for more communicative housing forms: individualism is not claiming loneliness but rather controlling the relation degree with others.'

Zurbuchen, Bernard¹

Context: individualization

Nowadays, an increasing number of people live alone. The proportion of one-person households has grown exponentially ever since the Second World War.²

This trend affects mainly developed countries in Europe, Japan and North America.³ In these single households, a vast majority are elderly people. In addition, it is essentially an urban phenomenon.⁴ In large cities such as Berlin, Copenhagen, Amsterdam and Helsinki, nearly every other household is single.⁵

1.

« Dans toutes les formes de ménage, il n'y a qu'un seul fait qui compte, c'est le réglage du rapport entre un individu et le ou les autres, et peut-être le fait que cet individu réclame une place croissante, conséquence de l'individualisation qui caractérise la société (c'est-à-dire notre société occidentale et industrielle). Ce fait n'est pas en contradiction avec la recherche de formes d'habitation plus communicatives: l'individualisme ne réclame pas la solitude mais le contrôle du degré de relation avec les autres. », in Lucan, J., Marchand B. and Steinmann, M. (2000) *Construire des logements: l'habitat collectif suisse 1950-2000*, Lausanne: Presses Polytechniques et Universitaires Romandes, p. 24.

2.

Figures show an evolution from 3% in the 1950s to an average 30 % nowadays, McRae, S. (1999) *Changing Britain: Families and Households in the 1990s*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 265-268.

3.

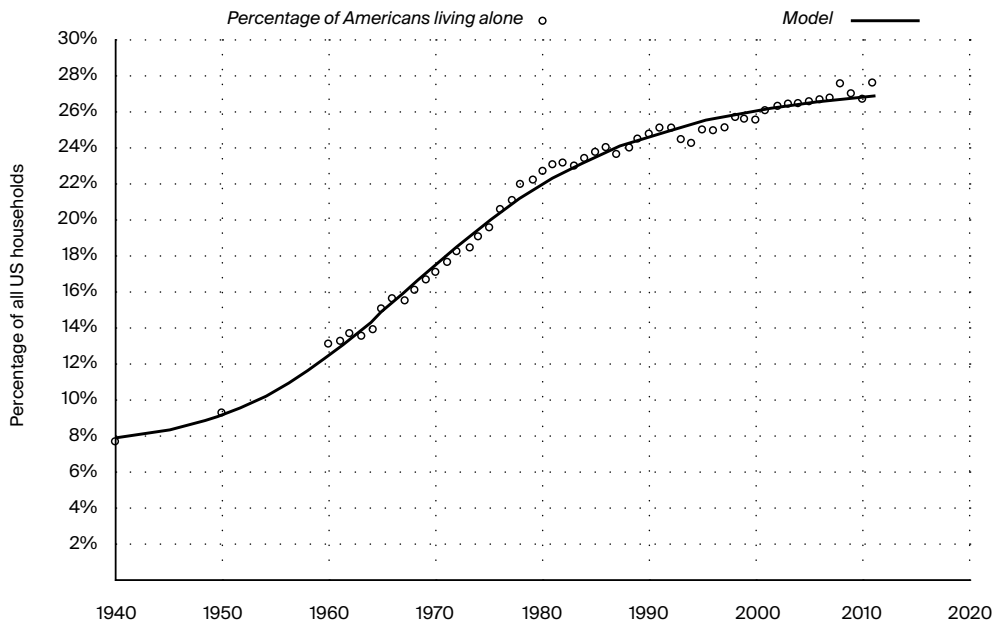
OECD figures show major disparities between Northern Europe and Southern countries: 'Single-person households constitute around 40% of households in Estonia, Finland, and Norway. By contrast, this proportion is around 20% in Portugal and less than 10% in Mexico.' Database, O. F. (2016) Family size and household composition, OECD.

4.

McRae, S. (1999) *Changing Britain: Families and Households in the 1990s*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 270-277.

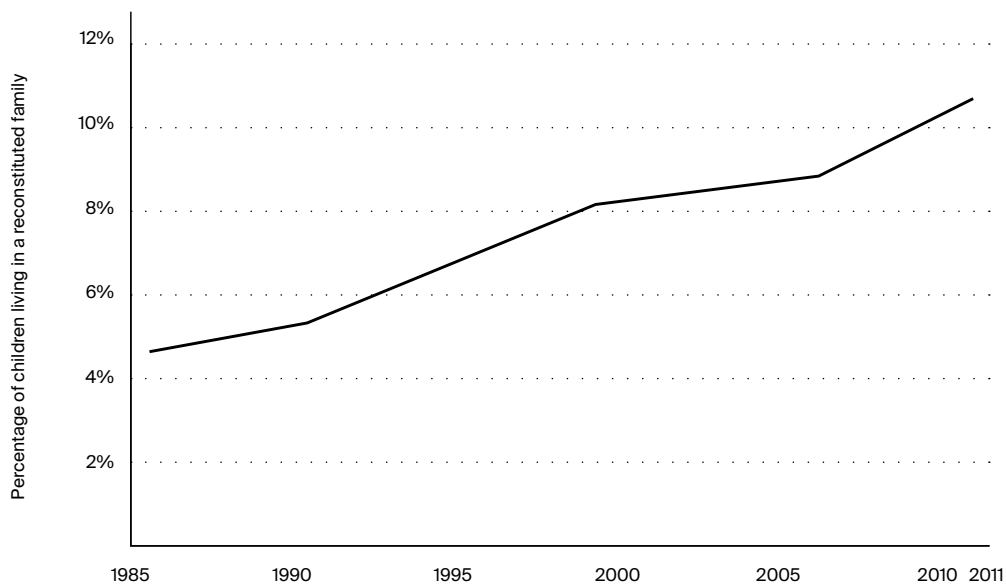
5.

Kotzeva, M. (2016) *Urban Europe - Statistics on cities, towns and suburbs*, Luxembourg, 9-11.



↑
Share of single households in the USA
(source: US Census Current Population Report 2012)

↓
Evolution of the share of children living in a reconstituted family in France
(source: INSEE 2012)



This condition can be either chosen or imposed. Indeed, while some people make the deliberate choice to live alone (young professionals, etc.), in which case it is often transitory, others have no choice but to live a solitary life (elderly, disabled people, etc.).

In addition to this transformation, there is a growing diversity in families' configurations (cohabitation, separate living, step-parents, single-parent households, etc.).

The diversity of our *separating and divorcing societies*⁶ leads to a multiplication of individual trajectories. The variety is marked on a lifelong scale since there is no longer a common life pattern shared broadly by society.⁷ Moreover, personal trajectories also tend to fluctuate on a day-to-day basis. For instance, the weekly schedule of reconstituted families varies a lot from one week to the other.

As a consequence of these sociological changes, dwelling trajectories have become increasingly individual. The nuclear family can no longer be regarded as the sole basis of our Western societies. From the end of the 19th century, the modernist ideology has considered the nuclear family (parents and children) the central unit of the social order and a protective and safe environment. Urban and architectural configurations have been conceived from this particular perspective.⁸ However, various forms of households (from extended family⁹ to solitary individuals) have persisted.¹⁰ Nowadays, there is a growing range of life trajectories, and often the nuclear family no longer predominates. Hence, in many cases, dwelling develops as an individual pursuit.

6.

As stated by de Singly, F. (2009) *Libres ensemble. L'individualisme dans la vie commune*, Saint-Amand-Montrond: Nathan, p.384.

7.

Allan, G. and Crow, G. (2001) *Families, Households and Society*, Basingstoke: Macmillan Education UK.

8.

Eleb, M. (1999) *L'invention de l'habitation moderne, Paris 1880-1914*, Paris: Hazan. Hall, E. T. (1966) *The Hidden Dimension*, New York: Anchor Books Editions.

9.

Young, M. D. and Willmott, P. (1957) *Family and Kinship in East London*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

10.

Godelier, M. (2010) 'Systèmes de parenté, formes de famille. Quelques problèmes contemporains qui se posent en Europe occidentale et en Euro-Amérique', *La revue lacanienne*, 3(8), 37-48.

Individualization and housing

These sociological changes have a significant impact on housing standards. Indeed, most of our housing stock is based on the traditional household's composition. Hence, past conceptions of housing structures increasingly fail to accommodate new ways of life.

Since the impact of individualization on housing affects both social and spatial matters, an interdisciplinary approach that combined scholars in architecture and socio-anthropology was established. First, two European cities were selected for their ambition to 'reconsider' housing approaches: Nantes and Zurich. Nantes has received much attention for its most recent developments on the Ile de Nantes, but also in its suburbs.¹¹ In the past two decades, Zurich has also produced numerous innovative housing projects that claim unambiguously to do 'more than housing',¹² mainly at the initiative of housing cooperatives.

Second, a team of researchers in architecture and the humanities analysed a series of collective housing projects.¹³ The analysis methodology was twofold. From an architectural point of view, innovative collective projects were selected in both cities and subjected to a thorough spatial analysis. All spatial propositions were studied by means of a typo-morphological analysis (space proportion, hierarchy, spatial relations, composition, etc.).¹⁴ In addition to this typo-morphological analysis, interviews were carried out with the projects' architects and the urban planners to comprehend

11.

Regarded by some as a green city or even as the most liveable city in Europe. Masson, P., Cartier, M., Saout, R., Retière, J.-N. and Suteau, M. (2015) *Sociologie de Nantes*, Paris: La Découverte.

12.

Mehr als Wohnen is one of the latest achievements of a combination of several cooperatives in Zurich. Hugentobler, M., Hofer, A. and Simmendinger, P. (2015) *More than Housing: Cooperative Planning - A Case Study in Zurich*, Basel: Birkhäuser.

13.

Their research activities were funded by the Christian Leleux Grant 2015-2016.

14.

For this purpose, all projects were redrawn with the same graphic codes in order to be able to compare them objectively.

their attitude regarding housing. From a social point of view, extended stays (one week for each city in July 2016) took place in two of the selected projects, which allowed researchers to make field observations as well as conduct interviews¹⁵ with residents and various stakeholders (project developers, academic researchers, etc.). Inhabitants were met door-to-door in Nantes, while they were met directly in communal spaces in Zurich. Ten to fifteen interviews of about one and a half hours were carried out with inhabitants in both projects, in their apartments. At the end of each meeting, the interviewees were asked to draw their dwelling.

The research outcomes are reported in a catalogue that combines spatial analysis and post-occupancy evaluation.

Spatial analysis: reduction/extension

Two of the analysed projects are based on similar composition principles: reduction and extension. In both cases, spatial determinants are reduced to a minimum in order to provide the dweller with a series of potential dwelling extensions.

La Sécherie: a collection of rooms

'La Sécherie' is a project built by *Boskop architectes* in 2008. It is set in the suburbs of Nantes, in the Bottière-Chénaie development zone.

The project is based on several principles. First, it provides a porous interface between a residential area and a new park. Second, the project is designed as a '*collection of rooms*'.¹⁶ The basic unit of the project is the dwelling room. All these rooms are alike in their initial design and have an area of four by four meters. In addition, the rooms do not present any predetermined function.¹⁷

15.

The interviewing method is based on the 'comprehensive approach' by Kaufmann. Kaufmann, J.-C. (2011) *L'entretien compréhensif*, Paris: Armand Colin.

16.

Statement by the architect. Interview with Sophie Delhay, Lille, July 2016.

17.

However, further development of the project led to more room specifications (e.g. the kitchens).



NOM
PRENOM
AGE
SITUATION FAMILIALE

PROFESSION
ARRIVE DANS LE
LOGEMENT
HABITATION PRECEDENTE

SURFACE LOGEMENT
TYPE DE LOGEMENT
SPECIFICITE

TYPE D'OPERATION
LIEU
LOYER

Sacha
Thomas
45 ans
Homme marié

Hôtellerie
2008
Rue Gary - ILM - T4 - appartement
Grand immeuble - 10 étages
84 m²
T4 - RDC avec cour
Petite cour avec pièce en plus
Petite terrasse à l'étage qui donne sur
la chambre
Impasse avec 3 entrées de logement
Beaucoup de travaux d'aménagement
réalisés par la locataire (sol, cuisine,
terrasse en bois, etc)

ILM
France-Nantes-quartier La Bottière
495 euros (+150 euros EDF)

Le collectif

Concernant la terrasse commune
Elle est au 1er étage et donne sur la chambre pour l'instant
(Véronique souhaite transformer cette pièce en salon et
profiter d'avantage de la lumière et de la terrasse)
Conflits d'usage de cet espace avec les voisins (on ne les
connaît pas puisqu'ils n'ont pas la même entrée) qui laissent
trop d'objets dans l'espace
Porte opaque en venant de chez Véronique, porte fonction
chez les voisins
Souhaite réaliser une séparation et diviser la terrasse en 2
Les voisins que l'on connaît le mieux sont ceux avec qui on
partage la même entrée
Avant l'arrivée de ces nouveaux locataires, jamais de souci.
Véronique utilisait la terrasse commune pour faire pendre
son linge.

Chloé : « De mettre une séparation sur la terrasse commune »

Véronique : « Ouais, ouais, genre glostra (?) vous savez ?
Quelque chose comme ça. Parce que là ils ont empli la
terrasse donc du coup... On a pas accès. Alors c'est soit
on rentre en conflit ou euh... Pour l'instant je laisse courir
pour cette année, je verrai ça l'année prochaine. »

Gérald : Vous avez une chambre, une pièce qui donne
dessus du coup ?

Véronique : Ouais j'ai une chambre ouais.

Chloé : ça fait pas trop de bruit alors ?

Véronique : Nan, nan mais surtout... Y a un bureau de
musée, enfin y en a partout...

Gérald : Ah oui ok ben alors on l'a vu je pense.

Chloé : C'est un peu trop quoi ?

Véronique : Ouais.

Gérald : Vous ne faites pas de musée (rime) ?

Conflits

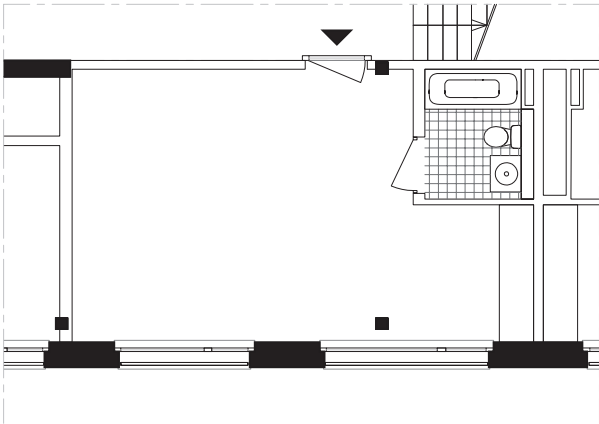
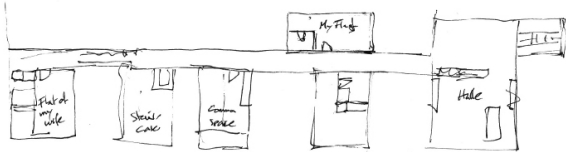
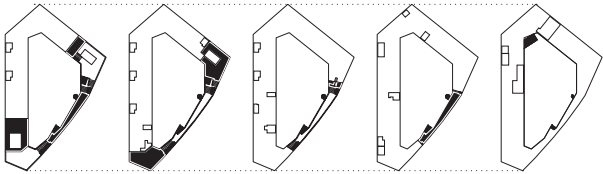
V : Ah ben je reçois quand même l'hiver, j'enlève la table
bas, je mets la table dans le salon. C'est pour ça d'ailleurs
que je veux une séparation du balcon là-haut quand j'aurais
le salon en haut pour pouvoir ouvrir la porte sans avoir...

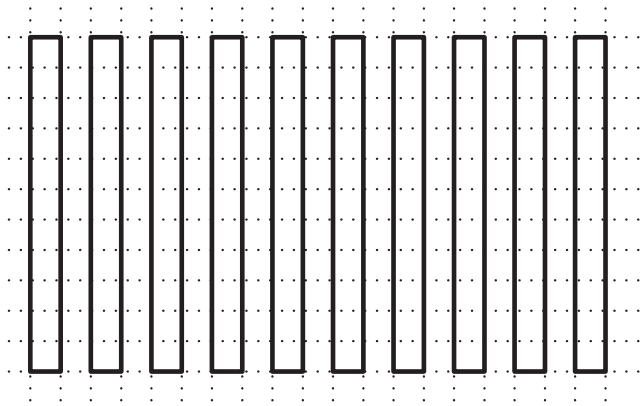
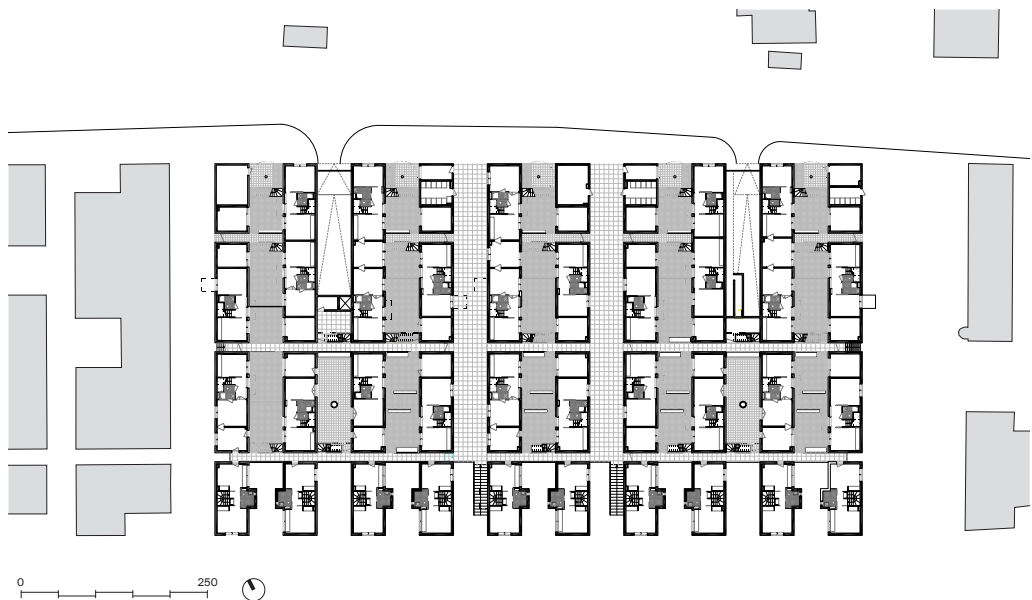
C : Vous pensez que c'est possible ? Ils l'ont déjà fait pour
d'autres logements ?

V : Je ne crois pas, je vais toujours demander. Au pire des
cas je le ferais moi-même.

G : Au pire vous pourriez trouver un accord avec les autres.
En disant tiens est ce que ça vous trait...

V : Ouais, à la rigueur ouais. Ben on se croise pas beaucoup,

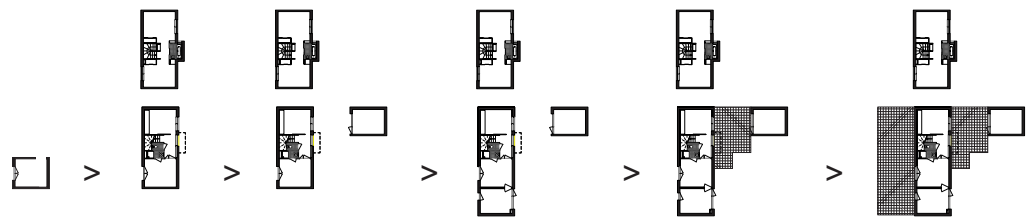




=



La Sécherie, ground floor and design principles,
a collection of rooms
(source: authors)



Room

Basic dwelling

Deported room

Joker room

Private courtyard

Shared courtyard

From the single room to the dwelling
(source: authors)

Based on this concept, the basic dwelling combines four rooms, two on the ground floor and two on the first floor. An exterior 'deported room' is then added to this layout, on the other side of the exterior space. Some apartments also have a 'joker room', an additional room that can be assigned to one of its neighbouring dwelling units according to the needs of the inhabitants. Finally, the dwellings offer two kinds of exterior spaces. The first one is a private terrace that links the 'deported room' to the main dwelling; the second one is shared by either two or four neighbouring dwellings.

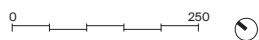
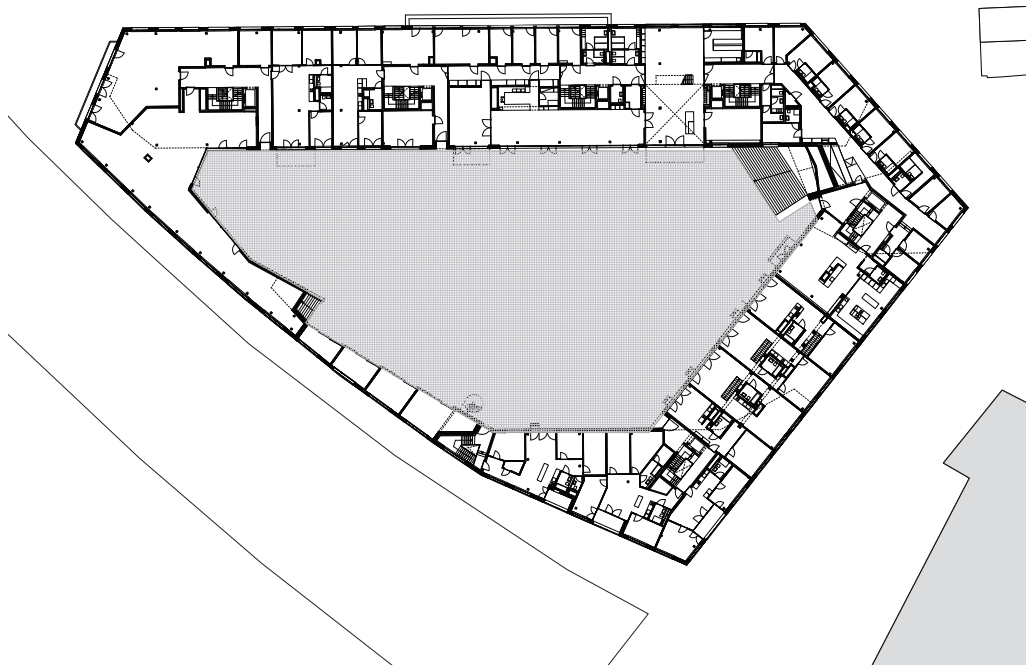
Kalkbreite: a complex block

The Kalkbreite cooperative project was built by Müller Sigrist in Zurich in 2014. It is set in the Aussersihl district, close to the city centre.

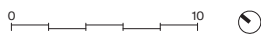
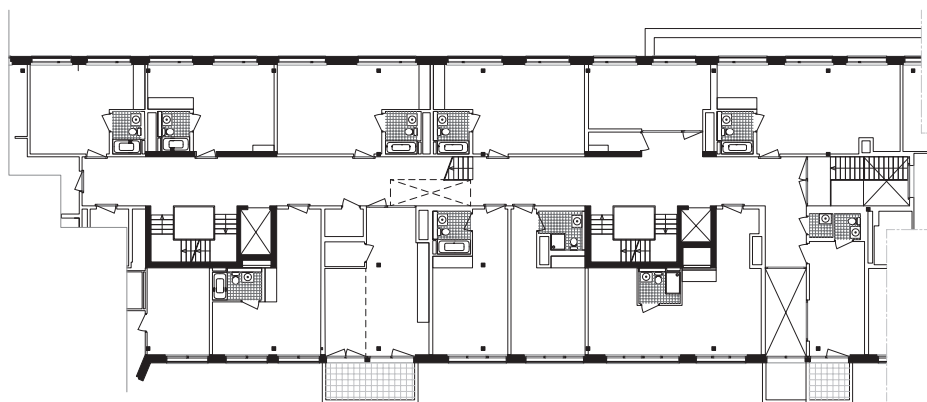
The project encompasses an entire urban block. It houses various functions, such as a tram depot on the ground floor with offices and commercial spaces on the perimeter. Above those spaces, housing is organized around a public central courtyard.

Regarding housing, the project conforms to a basic rule: all private spaces are reduced to a minimum in terms of surface and appliances (exterior spaces, kitchen furniture, etc.). Several typologies have been developed, from the 'cluster type', an aggregation of rooms along an interior street or around a shared living room, to more conventional apartments.

To compensate for these small living spaces, a series of services as well as collective spaces are positioned around the building, allowing '*for housing expansions*'. On the one hand, collective spaces range from a large roof garden to a set of terraces, each with different qualities. Furthermore, the building displays several collective interior spaces: a cafeteria on the level of the roof garden, a collective dining room, a library, several laundries, shared working facilities, a summer kitchen, a sauna, communal living and dining rooms in the clusters, etc. In addition, a set of unallocated rooms – '*boxes*' – are available throughout the building. Their use is determined



Kalkbreite, central garden level, Müller Sigrist, 2014
(source: authors)



One of Kalkbreite's large cluster apartments
(source: authors)

box



terraces



jokerzimmer



offices



library



laundry



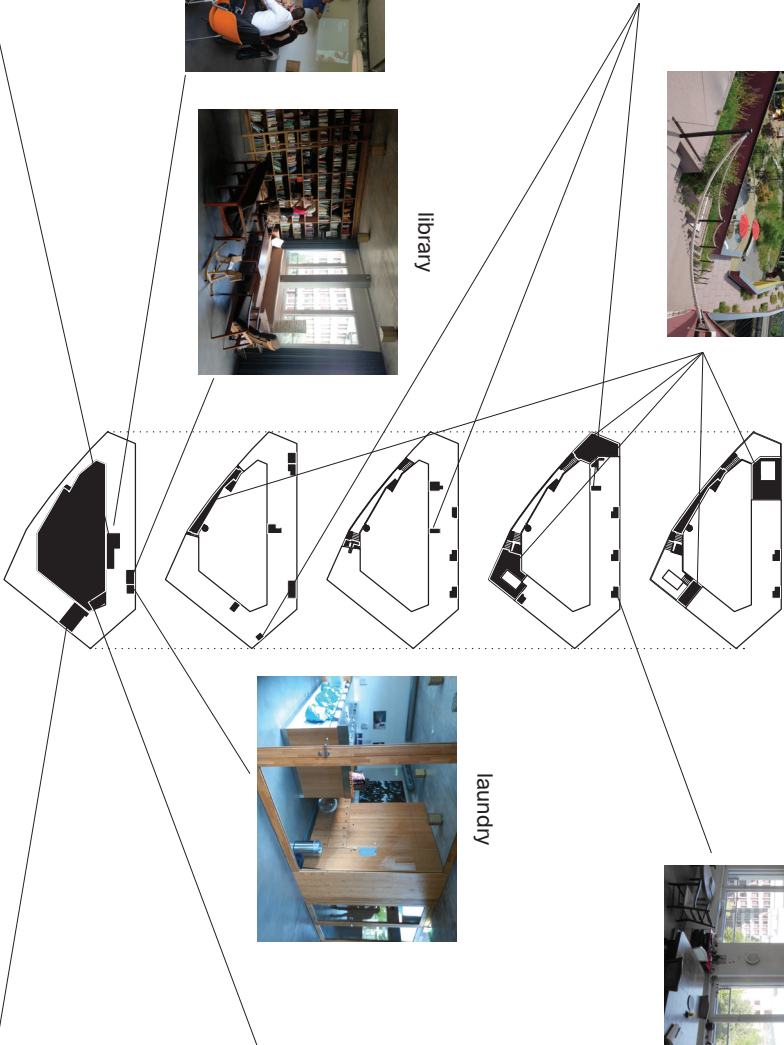
central garden



cafeteria



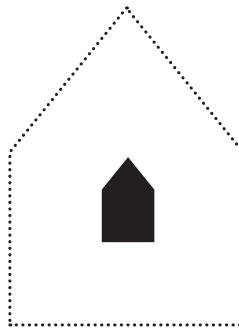
grosshaushalte
dining room



by the inhabitants.¹⁸ Moreover, a collection of 'joker rooms' are scattered all over the building, as a set of studios of approximately 29 m² with a bathroom but no kitchen. They are assigned to housing units¹⁹ for a limited period of time (ranging from six months to four years). On the other hand, various services are provided to the inhabitants, such as janitorial, housekeeping staff, the *Grosshaushalte*,²⁰ etc.

Reduction and extension

Two common principles – reduction and extension – are reflected in these projects. Indeed, both offer a reduced private nucleus – the lowest common housing denominator – around which dwelling extensions are organized.



In Nantes, the reduction principle endeavours to reduce the functional specificity of residential spaces.²¹ Given their spatial indetermination, all rooms are theoretically interchangeable. Hence, the basic dwelling would be a two-room apartment with a sanitary block of 38 m². Around this basis dwelling, a string of extensions ('deported room', 'joker room', exterior spaces) are arranged, each of them with a different status. Those extensions have a direct relationship to the basic dwelling.

18.

The on-site observation identified various occupations: sewing, painting, yoga, etc

19.

Contrary to La Sécherie, 'joker rooms' are not necessarily contiguous to their attached dwelling.

20.

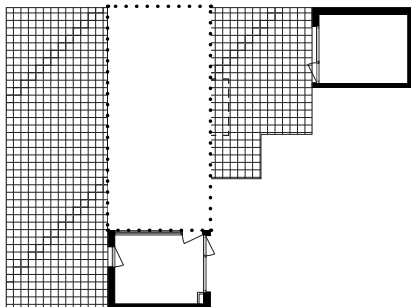
Literally meaning 'grand household', the concept was inspired by the Karthago co-housing project. Acting as a sub-community, it provides a kitchen and a range of amenities for 50 adults and 12 children for 140 CHF/month/person. In return, members offer collective services (cleaning, working in the fields, etc.).

21.

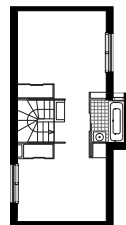
According to Sophie Delhay, '*a dwelling should not be interpreted functionally*'. Interview with Sophie Delhay, Lille, July 2016.



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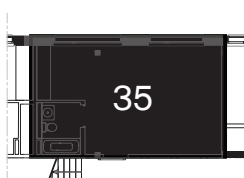
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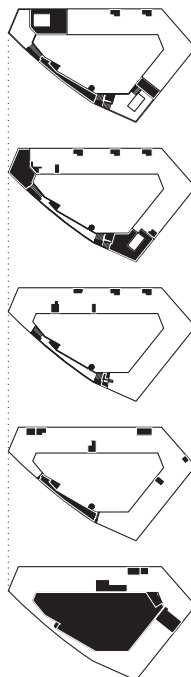
deported room, joker room,
private terrace, collective terrace

two rooms,
bathroom

Nantes, reduction/extension principle
(source: authors)



+



vegetable garden,
joker rooms,
terraces

summer kitchen,
joker rooms,
terraces, sauna,
boxes

joker rooms,
terraces, boxes

joker rooms,
terraces, boxes

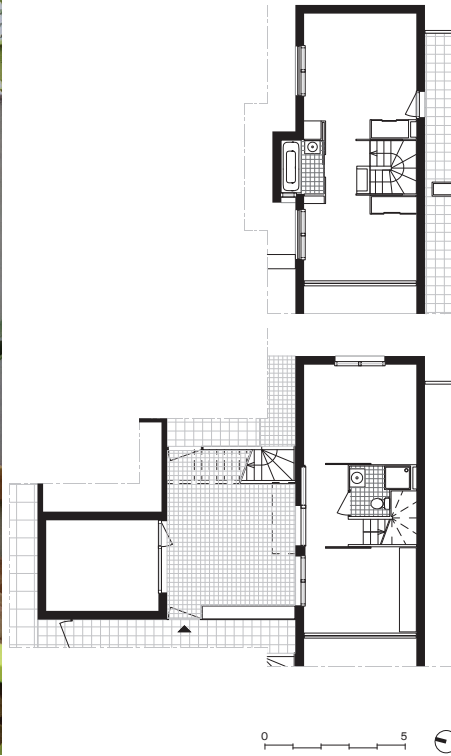
central garden,
cafeteria, offices,
laundry, library,
grosshaushalte
dining room

Zurich, reduction and extension principle
(source: authors)



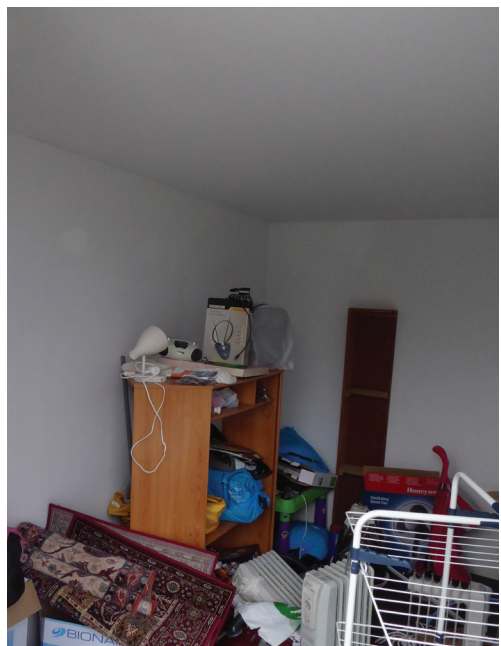


Zurich and Nantes, inhabitants
(source: authors)



↑
Monique

↓
Taking advantage, or not, of functional reduction
(source: authors)



In Zurich, the reduction and extension principle is an attempt to reduce private dwelling surfaces to a minimum. While the Swiss housing standard is 55 m² per person, in Kalkbreite it is 35 m². This reduction is compensated for by literally outsourcing several dwelling functions in shared spaces and services throughout the building. Hence, in both cases, dwelling spaces are organized between two poles. On the one hand, the private domestic nucleus serves as a conception lever. On the other hand, as a counterpart, a series of potential extensions of the dwelling are created. These potential spaces are made available to inhabitants according to their needs and uses.

Social analysis

Methodology, two stories

The potential of reduction and extension unveiled by the spatial analysis were tested by a series of field surveys carried out in both projects where researchers were housed for about one week.²²

In order to better understand the dwellings' adequacy for their inhabitants' uses, the kaleidoscope of experiences is illustrated by two singular stories.

Story 1: Nantes, Monique

In Nantes, Monique, 49, is a single mother living with her two children of 16 and 24. She has been living in the estate ever since it was built. Monique rents a four-room apartment of 84 m². It displays two specific features, a 'deported room' on the other side of the private courtyard and a communal terrace on the first floor, shared by only one neighbour.

Reduction

In Monique's case, the social landlord explained the project concept from the start. The idea of polyvalence was an interesting added value to her. Monique fully understands the spatial potential of her dwelling. Indeed, having grasped the opportunity of afunctional rooms,

22.

Interviews were conducted in French, English and German, but are translated into English for the sake of the article.

Monique is planning to move her living room upstairs in the future in order to better accommodate it, as her children gradually move out of the house. Hence, in her case, the functional reduction of rooms is an opportunity to reconfigure her dwelling place.

Some inhabitants of similar apartments, however, have absolutely no clue on how to activate their potential; some rooms remain literally untouched and are used as storage in the best-case scenario.

To counterbalance the functional reduction of space, the apartment offers a range of extensions, which generate a series of dwelling behaviours: decompression, independence and negotiation.

Extension-decompression

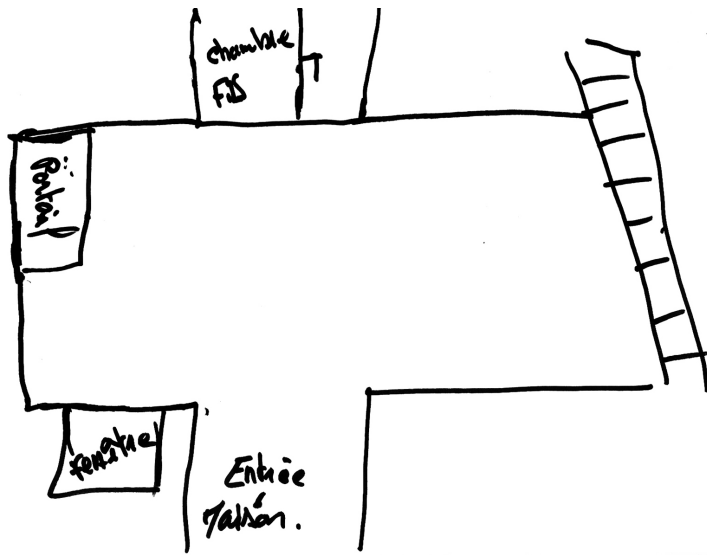
One of the qualities of the extensions of the dwelling is that they can be used as decompression spaces. In Monique's case, the private courtyard has this quality. It is a peaceful place, furnished almost as a room. She represents it literally as the core of her dwelling.

For others, this is the case for the 'deported room', as it is the case for a divorced father who confessed to the architect that '*when my daughter comes home, we go out together*'²³; he has turned it into an additional living room. Hence, in both cases, inhabitants consider the extension a potential decompression space that can serve more unusual functions.

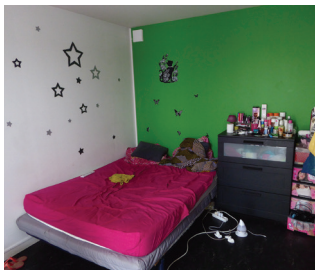
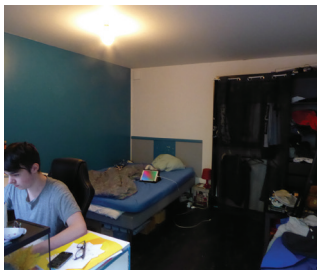
Extension-independence

Moreover, the extensions of the dwelling allow for independence in the household. This is the case for Monique's 'deported room', on the other side of the courtyard. It has become her son's retreat. '*He is able to sleep in and does not hear me when I vacuum ... He can go to sleep whenever he wants*'.

In other cases, the 'deported room' served a more specific function, varying from an Arab salon to a *boudoir* to a room for a new partner of a father who sleeps in the main house with his three children in order to create a gendered separation.

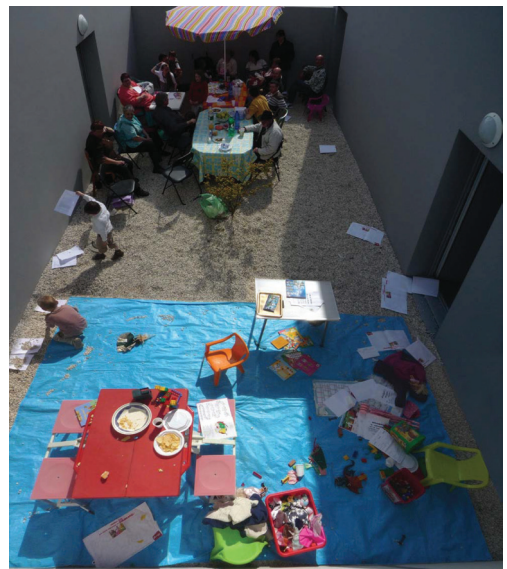


My dwelling, drawing by Monique
(source: authors)



↑
The 'deported room': a bedroom, a *boudoir*,
an Arabic salon,
(source: authors)

↓
Negotiating shared spaces. Monique – Hugo
(source: authors)



Extension-negotiation

In order to fully use all the apartments' extensions, inhabitants need to negotiate their use with others (inside or outside their household). For Monique, this is the case of the first floor terrace that she shares with her neighbour from the opposite apartment. Monique barely uses the terrace, because her neighbour has monopolized it. Tired of having to negotiate this space, she wants to split the terrace into two private ones.

While other inhabitants experience the same kind of conflicts, forcing them to shut down their access to the extensions, others have managed to find agreement with other tenants to manage their shared terraces. When this is the case, inhabitants use two different exterior spaces (e.g. one for the children to play in and one for the adults).

Story 2: Zurich, Martin

The reduction and extension principle in Kalkbreite is exemplified by the dwelling patterns of Martin, a 62-year-old married man with three daughters. As their daughters grew up, the couple decided to move from their 250-m² house in the countryside back to Zurich. After living in several apartments in town, they now live in a 62-m² apartment in Kalkbreite.

While this move to a smaller dwelling was a conscious choice for Martin, others in the building do not see it as a choice but rather something they were driven to do (e.g. as ageing or disabled people, less wealthy individuals, separated couples, sometimes are).

Reduction

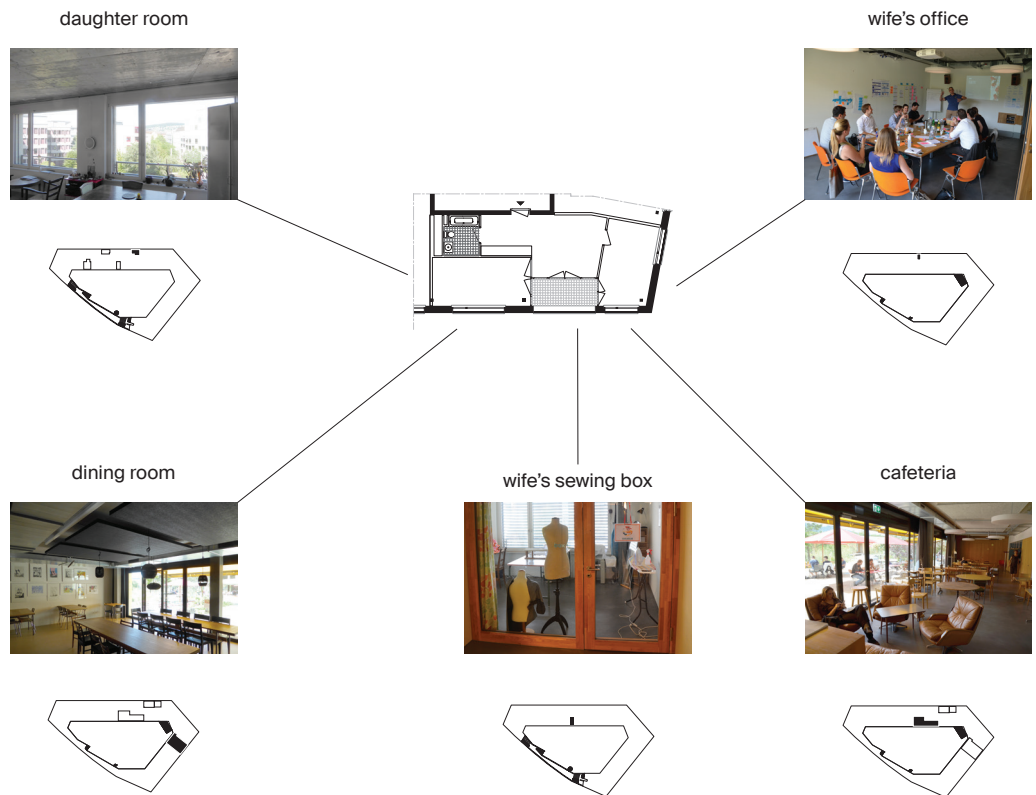
Moving from his comfortable house with a garden to a small apartment has had consequences for Martin's living habits. First, as with many inhabitants in Kalkbreite, Martin had to leave behind most of his furniture and use fewer appliances.²⁴ Second, he and his wife are now forced to live in 'a *much more confined*' environment. Finally, the couple is no longer able to house their three daughters in their private apartment.

24.

Even though many inhabitants confess that they 'cheat' in adding some appliances to their apartment.



Martin
(source: authors)



Martin's uses of the extensions of his apartment
(source: authors)

In addition, most apartments have no exterior space that encourages inhabitants *'to enhance the use of the collective exterior spaces'*. For many, the central question is *'how to forget the [traditional] housing'*.

Extension-decompression

In view of these significant changes, Martin has adapted his living habits as well as the very limits of his home. His actual dwelling is spread throughout the building. As he puts it himself, *'in Kalkbreite, your living space is automatically larger than your private apartment'*. For instance, Martin reads his newspaper in the cafeteria and has supper in the *Grosshaushalte* dining room, while his wife works in an office on the other side of the central courtyard or uses the textile workshop 'box' – *'her refuge'* – for her sewing activities. Both succeed in decompressing by using these apartment extensions. In addition, Martin admits that his vacation house has also eased the relative compactness of their apartment.

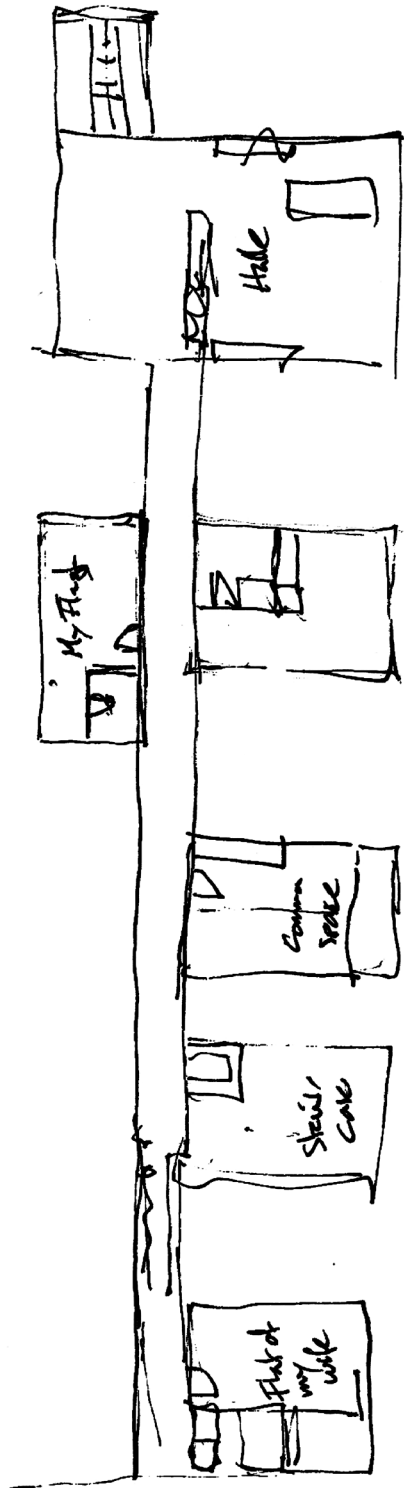
Other inhabitants illustrate the use of these extensions when they draw a picture of their dwelling. In two particular cases, the dwelling's extensions allow couples to literally *'live apart together'*²⁵ (e.g. *Hugo's story*, see opposite page). Hence, they live in the same building but in separate individual flats.

Extension-independence

Only one of Martin's daughters still lives with him and his wife. However, she does not live in his apartment because of its size. Instead, she uses a 'joker room' in another part of the building, which grants her relative independence, *'and she does indeed what she wants ... it's chaos over there ... it's her thing'*. It is seen as an ideal transition before leaving the household for good.

This 'joker room' principle is very popular in the building. A resident whose husband suffers from Alzheimer's also uses it. A friend of theirs moved into the 'joker room' in order to help with daily care. Nevertheless, this exterior room principle is not the only feature that gives inhabitants

²⁵.
de Singly, F. (2009) *Libres ensemble. L'individualisme dans la vie commune*, Saint-Amand-Montrond: Nathan.



My dwelling, drawing by Hugo. From left to right,
 'Flat of my wife, staircase, common space, my flat, hall'.
 (source: authors)

more independence, as most single households stress the fact that the building offers greater independence than in a traditional apartment.

Extension-negotiation

Splitting up the dwelling's functions throughout the building has a major impact on its social organisation. It compels people to negotiate their use of space and creates sub-communities. For instance, Martin has become very involved in the *Grosshaushalte*.

Sometimes, this negotiation is demanding, leaving some of the collective spaces vacant or simply less frequented because their '*access is awkward*' (e.g. the upper terrace, only accessible through a cluster apartment). For instance, the living rooms of the 'street clusters' are very often empty. Moreover, services are also pretexts for negotiation: inhabitants organize various services for others (summer parties, etc.) while '*collective work no longer exists since it was impossible to control*'.

Living beyond the limits of housing

Our societies tend to evolve towards increasingly individual living trajectories. Reducing personal housing space is a dwelling principle that seems to accommodate this trend. It can operate by reducing domestic space or functional specificity.

Yet the explorations of the La Sécherie and Kalkbreite projects demonstrate that the dwelling 'reduction' principle is not sufficient in itself and creates various difficulties. To compensate for these restrictions, both housing projects offer a series of dwelling extensions that are either remote or in direct relation to the reduced housing. This combination of 'reduction and extension' allows inhabitants to dwell beyond the limits of the reduced nucleus.

Thanks to this combination, decompression and independence are guaranteed for inhabitants. Decompression refers to how dwellers welcome others into their home. Any dwelling should ensure the modulation of this hospitality. Independence represents the dwelling



↑
Martin's daughter's '*joker room*'
(source: authors)

↓
Street-cluster, living room
(source: authors)



as a place that spares²⁶ the inhabitant from presence of others. The dwelling needs to enable the dweller to define the right distances from others.²⁷

Being able to host or spare oneself from others are two major characteristics of dwelling. They are achieved here through the extensions of housing.

Yet in order to activate such potential, several skills are required of inhabitants. First, they need to be aware of the dwelling's capacities and possible extensions. This awareness is generally acquired through education or more specifically through communication about the housing project itself. Second, using these extensions depends on the competences (social, economic, etc.) of inhabitants. Third, activating the dwelling's potentials is determined by the number of inhabitants when communal spaces are disputed either explicitly or implicitly.²⁸

From a sustainable perspective, once activated, the 'reduction and extension' principle offers two major options.

First, it allows for dwelling evolution, both on individual (personal trajectories on a daily or life basis) and multi-personal levels. The reduction of the housing unit to its core combined with potential extensions provides dwellers with additional possible configurations and a variety of long-term projections. The dwelling configurations can change without a tenant having to move to another abode. Reconfigurations are possible: the spatial patterns are not static and can promote change. The possible reconfigurations give the dwelling a sense of polyvalence.

Second, the principle offers means for the dwellers to decide. It enables them to broaden their life choices and individual freedom. In this sense, the dwelling is a source of empowerment.

26.

'The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving', Heidegger, M. (1971) *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Toronto: Harper & Row.

27.

Besse, Jean-Marc (2013). *Habiter un monde à mon image*, Paris: Flammarion, pp. 42-43.

28.

However, this assessment needs to be qualified in relation to the fact that all apartments are rented in both case studies, creating less friction.

In conclusion, the individual dwelling can be used as a new paradigm for housing production if it does not imply solely reducing dwelling limits. By applying the 'reduction and extension' principle, the dwelling can properly support the relationship between the individual and others. These changes represent a substantial paradigm shift, as many dwellers testified, in Nantes and Zurich, that they live beyond the limits of housing, that they '*use the home, not the flat*'.

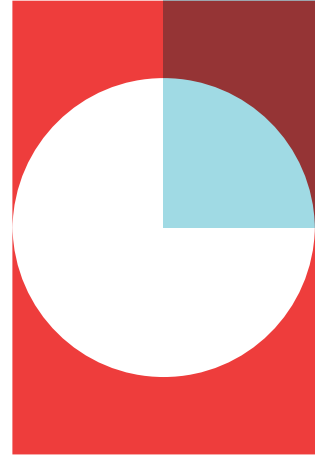
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Housing on the Isle of Nantes:

inevitability of culture, limits of counterculture ?

Jean-Louis Violeau



The opposition between 'culture' and 'counterculture' is explored through the case study of the Isle of Nantes. Indeed, in this paradigmatic development, the first tendency was to build many units of housing to address the demographic crisis in Nantes, one of many such crises across France. However, this inclination has evolved over the past decade to incorporate alternative concepts such as shared spaces in collective housing. Hence, ideas that once were utopian are incorporated into mainstream thinking and housing construction before being digested or understood properly.

In reference to Roland Barthes, this unavoidable imbalance between utopian and mainstream ideas raises two questions. First, conventional culture, relying solely on statistics, proves its limitations when it comes to producing adequate housing. Second, alternative cultures become rapidly obsolescent once they become mainstream. Yet could this counterculture rather be a parallel phenomenon to culture, with a capacity for enriching the reality of housing altogether?

Culture and counterculture fit together rather like nuts and bolts, bonded by the complementary nature of their structuring function. Their limits complement each other: culture always has a tendency to smooth, flatten and use everything for its own purpose while giving it a superficial gloss of dignity, whereas counterculture is doomed to remain marginal if it is not officially recognized by the elites.

Is housing designed to develop the city or generate sales?

The inevitability of culture and the limits of counterculture: the 'housing question' which was raised and subsequently implemented from the beginning of the urban project in 1999 on the Isle of Nantes provides a good illustration of these contradictory terms. The first question raised in Nantes was *the* question of the 2000s, that of *turnover*, encouraged by the unchecked property growth as well as the demographic pressure to which Nantes, like other French cities, was subjected.

The demographic growth contributed to the positive conditions of the Isle project: between 1990 and 1999, the Nantes urban area welcomed 70,000 additional inhabitants, thereby surpassing Montpellier 'the genius'. The population of Nantes increased three times as fast as that of France, with an undeniable tertiarization of its active fringe. It can never be stressed enough how much the film *Mercredi folle journée*,¹ released in 2000, by one of the greatest sociologists of all time, Pascal Thomas, improved the town's image, and helped accelerate its unquestionable sociological transformation. And what is more, the film stands the test of time!

However, could a project (or a forecast) seriously be envisaged (prepared, made) using anything other than a statistical programme? Because you really have to treat men like things, the pioneers of the human sciences work programme would have replied! Sociology was the queen of sciences in the 1960s, followed in its tracks by psychoanalysis until the end of the 1980s, both soon

1.
Thomas, P. (2001) *Mercredi, folle journée!* Ah! Victorial Films, Euripide Productions, France, 127 min.

to be overtaken by economics, which has reigned supreme since the beginning of the 1990s. Architects had no other option than to keep pace. An unfortunate reminder of this period is the *Yléo* block designed by Christian de Portzamparc, a gigantic and regrettably multicoloured fortress that takes 15 minutes to walk around.

Once the 2008 property crisis was over (because crises are always property crises too), the mandate of Flemish town planners Anne-Mie Depuydt and Marcel Smets consisted principally of enabling architecture projects to emerge. Henceforth the focus was on making home ownership affordable while concluding (with *VEFA*² and the help of the *Office HLM Nantes Habitat*) some spectacular operations to bring social housing to the Loire riverfront opposite the historical centre. An example is the *L'Oiseau des îles* by Antonini and Darmon (2014) where the complex volumes and circulation are unified by a strict geometric framework. Its neighbour, *Imbrika* (Brénac and Gonzalez for the developer Giboire, 2016), is less centred on the social aspect but nevertheless shows a great ability to combine activities and housing, similar to the Haussmannian fabric of Paris: 3,000 m² of office space occupy the first four levels of the main building. They form a pedestal, a footboard that raises the housing up towards the sun and the unobstructed view of the Isle of Nantes and the historic town centre. If outwardly all that seems very clear, almost crystalline, this is not the case inside.

Time for 'sharing'

The 2010s were a time of sharing, the time of 'co'-habitat, -working, -designed, whatever you like. The west of the Isle, on the *Prairie-au-duc*, was incomplete without a guest room available to the building occupants on a shared basis, or a communal laundrette, workshop, vegetable gardens and shared bike shed. All managed for the most part by the future property management company SAMOA, the *Société Publique Locale*,³ which

2.
Vente en Etat Futur d'Achèvement
(Sales of Properties in State of Future Completion).

3.
Local Public Company.

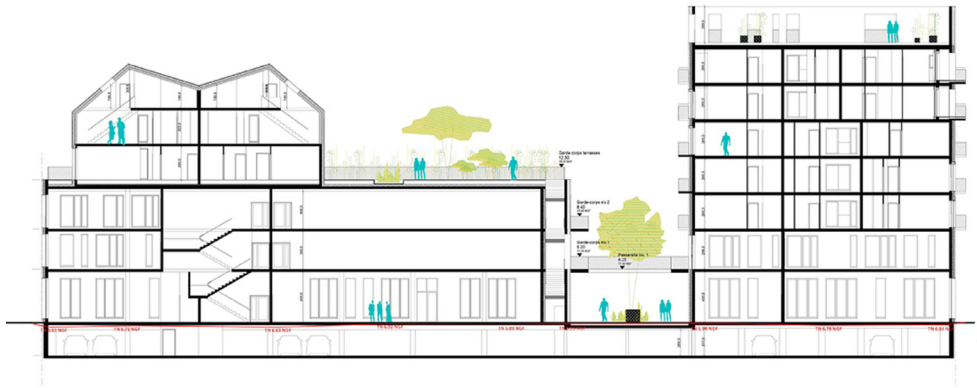
runs the urban project and clearly had an understanding with the bankers and solicitors, and all the players involved in property in general, to facilitate these more or less alternative developments.

The recently delivered *UNIK* development (Sandra Planchez for the developer *Réalités*) features shared roof terraces while maintaining a clear hierarchy in the amenities available to private and social housing, whereas *1 Babin-Chevaye* (Berthomieu-Bissery-Mingui for ADI) offers a fine example of intergenerational shared housing with spacious accommodation in the heart of the Isle.

Still under construction, the *Mayflower* (ECDM and RAUM for Icade) or the *G2* block (Tectône and TACT architects for SNI/GHT/Les Ruches) is a good illustration of these soon to be implemented principles, the former featuring a modular double facade and for some units a double entrance, and the second a concession to the participatory process for 15 housing units.

Finally, the ambitious *ILINK* development (Block/ Guinée-Potin/Explorations architectures), to which the principles of the Smets-Depuydt mandate have applied since 2012, is at last opening its doors. Combining offices, apartments (180) and shops in a vast intergenerational development of 22,000 m², *ILINK* has been designed in conjunction with the future occupants as well as the people who will work there – and no fewer than four developers. Although the building is not very high (five to nine storeys), it is enough to change the look of the Loire riverfront.

ILINK offers its residents a concierge service, a *co-working* space, a day nursery and communal gardens, a cultural space and an urban vacation rental as well as car parks shared by tenants and office workers. Does this define the new neighbourhood aesthetics? And will these neighbourhood aesthetics manage to avoid falling into the trap of *gentrification*? Whereas an apartment with a double aspect with its exterior extension was for a long time considered to be the imperative for a certain architectural quality, these references have undoubtedly



↑
Shared rooftop terraces in the UNIK project
(source: SPLAAR)

↓
Preliminary walks with future residents, by ILINK, 2014
(source: author)

↓↓
ILINK meeting with residents in Hangar 32, 2014
(source: author)



evolved in recent years and become more complex, especially in relation to metropolitan project territories, because inertia still exists in the more discreet four-storey buildings in the suburbs and outskirts.

Fewer dividing walls, more bridges (between individuals)?

Some questions still remain following this rapid overview. Are the 'self-managed' and 'shared' projects increasingly found on the Isle these days the forerunners of a new, increasingly 'shared' way of life (and urban growth) or do they limit this notion of sharing to defined areas? How can the idea of sharing be spread on a larger scale than the Isle's? And, in times of economic crisis, how can a more or less virtuous exchange be maintained with stakeholders in the construction chain?

In June 2016, the *LINK* concierge service was set up temporarily at 1 mail du Front populaire. One year later, in April 2017, before the final delivery, the development was already awarded the *Pyramide d'Or* by the regional FPI⁴ (Federation of Real Estate Developers). Where and how is the housing production chain renewed? Is it a question of supporting the project management and project owner during the conception of a new neighbourhood adapted to 'new life styles'... or a gathering of new-look co-owners? With a food truck, a crepe delivery tricycle, after work drinks, anti-waste parties, a recovery centre, cookery workshops, a couture-bistro, agricultural associations and organic baskets, chard gratin and apple and lemon juice, etc.

Are we looking at an architecture that moves forward while watching the past recede into the distance? For finally we must above all remember the numerous successive resurgences of this profound desire for alternatives which lies vitally in all of us! When people no longer make plans, they have one foot in the grave. This desire is for Utopia, for as Miguel Abensour said, the human being is a 'utopic animal', and, as Maurice Godelier pointed out, is alone in constantly attempting to modify the rules of community

4.

Fédération des Promoteurs Immobiliers
(Federation of Real Estate Developers).

life. Utopia is necessary to draw a critical horizon for which we endlessly seek to come up with alternatives to our daily life – everyone shares this sentiment whatever their political views. Given the 50th anniversary of the events of May 1968 was celebrated last year, it is time to draw additional conclusions from them. How has their inheritance been passed on? And how could it be passed on?

Inevitability of culture, limits of counterculture

At the time, culture was thought inevitable and bourgeois. Yet, at the same time, counterculture, parallel or alternative, had its limits. Let us borrow this formula from Roland Barthes.⁵ How do things stand today?

We have certainly witnessed a gradual breakdown in the bourgeois dwelling culture – but it is still unfinished, because we also need to reassure ourselves and come back to familiar spaces and usual forms of occupation when it comes to living and ensuring our vital functions: eating, sleeping and reproducing. The question of the avant-garde and its use still remains in the background. In addition, hierarchies and cultural dissonance have not basically changed.

It is fate, fortunate or unfortunate, call it what you will, but one can still see the phenomenon through the eyes of Roland Barthes: the alternative cultures (to the dominant culture) were found to be outdated (and therefore used for other ends) when they went along with (and were therefore parallel to) the culture they claimed to subvert (once again, the dominant culture). However, one must choose between what is alternative and what is parallel, because the parallel has also borne fruit even if it has remained marginal. And at a time when we have had enough of the media's senseless interpretations of 'cultural populism' it would be good to clarify certain points – two of our greatest sociologists, Jean-Claude Passeron and Claude Grignon, have written an almost definitive work on the question.

5.

Launched in 1972 in an interview which appeared in *Politique-hebdo* and taken up in Barthes, R. (1999) *Le grain de la voix: entretiens 1962-1980*, Paris: Seuil.

One can also see all this as a series of hazards, misfortune and mishaps – which is basically what history is. Is it the fault of all those architects who worked on solar and alternative energies throughout the 1970s that the price of petrol suddenly started to go down somewhat unexpectedly at the start of the 1980s and that the Left was converted to the dogma of nuclear for electricity after 1981 in France? Is it the fault of the architects who spent a decade thinking about public workshops that, just as they thought the time was ripe, the *authorship* notion made a strong comeback? As Roland Barthes said, there remains in each of us an eternal *desire* for authorship. Is it by chance that at the same time traditional pedagogy made a comeback in schools?

Can we dream of a very classic developer, such as Kauffman or Cogedim, employing a *collective* of young architects on separate work packages or a programme of 150 homes? One day perhaps on the Isle of Nantes where, contrary to too many classic joint development zones, there will be a possible opening towards the big urban landscape. No place or few places where one would have a vague feeling of being shut in. One of the big weekly magazines recently published a supplement about real estate on the Isle with the title ‘Still under development’ (*L’Express*, 28 August 2015).

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1105. La Course Landaie – Un Ecart de Giovanni

LES ARTISTES MONTRÈNT QUE L'UTOPIE
CE N'EST PAS & INCONGRU
OU L'INVILITE mais bien une METHODE
de PENSEE pour le REEL

CULTURE

Dans le dérèglement comme
dans l'absurde: "Il y a du premier
Devois, fin des années 1950. Dans

Dwelling through building and building through dwelling

The socio-spatial practices of Notre-Dame-des-Landes

Philippe De Clerck

Since 2009, in Notre-Dame-des-Landes (NDDL) near Nantes, a gathering of anti-globalist and anti-capitalist activists have occupied the site for a projected metropolitan airport, renaming it 'Zone à Défendre' (ZAD). Having managed to maintain long-term occupation of the site, the occupiers have gradually been able to move beyond a practice of resistance, in order to develop practices of dwelling and commoning in an intense dialogue with the history and natural characteristics of the site they occupy. Though the ZAD of NDDL has been quite extensively studied as an innovative practice of political opposition, much less has been written about the practices of everyday life in the ZAD. This article will therefore attempt to highlight these practices and how they pertain to a radical interpretation of 'sustainability' in its ecological, economic and social dimensions. We will identify elements on various scales of everyday life in the ZAD and determine how they articulate territory, ecology and participation, in order to portray and assess the ZAD of NDDL not only as a symbolic place of resistance to a commodification of the territory, but also as a birthplace of ways of life profoundly symbiotic with the territory both culturally and ecologically.

Introduction

Beyond defence

'On habite ici, et c'est pas peu dire'.¹ It is probably no coincidence that this playful and evocative phrase coined by the occupiers of the *Zone à Défendre* (ZAD) in Notre-Dame-des-Landes recalls Gébé's 'On arrête tout, on réfléchit, et c'est pas triste'.² In a ZAD,³ the very action of dwelling has enriched critical thinking. As the latter became increasingly powerless, cynicism arose as a tool against the injustices⁴ generated by '*capitalist realism*'⁵ of the institutions. The concrete commodification of the territory through what occupiers have called '*Useless and Imposed Grand Projects*'⁶ is fought against by physically occupying sites, occupations which generate singular types of experimental dwelling.

Out of the different ZADs throughout France,⁷ the largest, oldest and most renowned is undoubtedly the site for a future metropolitan airport in Notre-Dame-des-Landes (NDDL), in the northwest of Nantes. Since 2009,

1.

'We dwell here, and that's saying quite something'. This essay makes extensive use of several French-speaking sources. All translations are by the author and should therefore be considered provisory and, in the particular case of *Contrées*, unrelated to the publication of an English translation (forthcoming, Verso Books). Collectif Mauvaise Troupe, (2016a) *Contrées. Histoires croisées de la ZAD de Notre-Dame-des-Landes et de la lutte No TAV dans le Val Susa*, Paris: Éditions de l'Éclat.

2.

The phrase which loosely translates into 'We stop, we think, and it's something else!' was the subtitle of his seminal work *L'an 01*, a comic strip published from 1970 to 1974 (in what would later become *Charlie Hebdo*) that embodied the radical spirit on May 68 in France.

3.

The term 'Zone A Défendre' (zone to defend) is a hijacking of the acronym 'ZAD', originally designating a 'Zone d'Aménagement Différé' in which a state agent or private proxy can enforce a right of first refusal for all real estate, making it the mandatory first potential buyer, in expectancy of a future redevelopment.

4.

Boltanski, L. and Chiapello, E. (1999) *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme*, Paris: Gallimard.

5.

Fisher, M. (2009) *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*, Ropley: Zero Books.

6.

Camille (2015) *Le petit livre noir des grands projets inutiles*, Neuvy-en-Champagne: Le passager clandestin.

7.

Due to the highly informal methods of organizing, it is hard to say when an opposition can genuinely be considered a ZAD, and how long it remains such (which can range from a few days to several years). Despite these variations an estimate can be made of around 15 other ZADs in France, all significantly smaller than NDDL (Subra, 2016).

anti-capitalist activists have gathered on site to block the project, amounting today to some 200 to 300 occupiers. While initially precarious, the occupation was strongly reinforced in 2012 after a failed attempt by law enforcement authorities to evacuate the occupiers, resulting in a widespread diffusion of sometimes violent, even martyr-like imagery of protesters armed with sticks and stones opposing heavily equipped intervention teams, or showcasing their vulnerability by standing naked in front of police forces.

From occupation to inhabitation

This newfound visibility stirred a movement of support throughout France,⁸ and the lack of other attempts to reinstate law and order opened the prospect of a longer-term occupation, provoking a debate over how to define a 'post-airport' future, in which nature and commoning could enter the realm of politics. A future founded on becoming anchored in the territory '*by strong mooring ropes made from ties unfathomable for the managerial and commodifying machinery of planning*',⁹ ties of mutual obligation that '*make us belong to places as much as these places belong to us*'.¹⁰ Territory and place become extraordinary, albeit in a way that is unrelated to any type of performative consideration. In doing so, the occupiers act both as *dwellers* and *by dwelling*, which results in a more profound imbrication of political practice and everyday life. The reflections, but also and more important the very concrete practices occurring and developing on the territory of the ZAD, can thus be seen as experimentally materializing a radical relationship to space and territory. Space becomes then fundamentally interdependent with the life of its inhabitants, both human and non-human, individual and collective.

8.

A festive 'reoccupation demonstration' of evicted areas in December 2012 gathered some 40,000 people on site.

9.

Anonymous (2014a) 'Ceci n'est pas un camping', <http://zad.nadir.org/spip.php> [online], available: [Accessed 3 March 2017].

10.

Anonymous (2012) 'Aux révolté-e-s de Notre-Dames-des-Landes', <http://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article320> [online], available: [Accessed 3 March 2017].

The ZAD of NDDL was quite extensively studied as an innovative practice of political opposition. However, despite the relatively widespread interest it has stirred in progressive architecture circles in France and beyond, relatively little has been written about the practices of everyday life in the ZAD, apart from opinion pieces, writings in ideologically resonant publications (radical-left or ecological news reporting) or writings by the occupiers themselves such as the *Collectif Mauvaise Troupe*. In this article, I therefore wish to bypass deliberately the (nonetheless crucial) issues concerning the airport project controversy and the legitimacy of occupying a piece of land, with no title or deed, in the name of the common good, as well as the issue of police and/or activist violence. Instead, I will directly explore dwelling practices and visualize their pertinence in the face of current societal challenges in terms of economy, culture and territorial sustainability. By doing so, I hope to contribute to an understanding of the relevance of the ZAD beyond a merely ideological line of conflict.

Alternative territoriality

The method of inquiry was twofold. First, an analysis of existing literature on the subject, both academic and non-academic, allowed situating the discourse of the activists and gathering existing perspectives. Second, the actual inquiry combined repeated on-site observations and interviews – formally whenever possible, informally when needed – with a significant number of activists living in the ZAD in order to confirm or enrich the observed spatial realities with a finer understanding of the social undercurrents that determine their dwelling practices.

It is therefore with the help of the occupiers themselves, some of them prolific writers, others engaged conversation partners, that I will attempt to assemble what could be considered a vocabulary of the spatial practice in the ZAD of NDDL, to illustrate as fully as possible the philosophy of place described above. I will list claimed principles and concrete practices of space in the ZAD, highlighting where needed how what is proposed is (or wishes to be) an opposition to specific territorial practices of late capitalism, despite the risk of appearing overly antinomic in my reading. The different

occupation features are listed in the order in which they have manifested themselves, from the initial precarious occupation of the ZAD to the claim for a possible autonomous commune on the site, i.e. a relation to territory, a production of space, and the realization of an everyday of commoning. Finally, I will summarize these aspects in an overarching spatial approach founded on the rediscovered notion of 'communal luxury'.

Generating a 'terroir'

Naming as reappropriating

The reactivation of living relationships with place is made visible even before entering the occupied land, through its mapping by the new inhabitants. The favoured term to designate the collectively occupied spaces on the 1650 hectares of the ZAD is neither 'neighbourhoods' nor 'collectives', even less 'houses', but 'places'.¹¹ These are home to groups of two to 15 people, and all have a name. A newly built place is given a name by its builders or occupants (*Lama Faché, Ker Terre, La Boîte Noire, Youpi-Youpi, Wardine, Chateigne*), names that '*tell stories in the present*',¹² joining them to the existing names of farms that have been reoccupied by the 'zadists' (*Bellevue, Saint-Jean du Tertre, Haut Fay, Noé Verte*, etc.). Some of these names are actualised, e.g. the '*Vacherie*' becoming the *Vache-rit*. On zadist cartography, old and new names are undistinguishable: '*As a palimpsest, the new names cover the old ones, but there is transparency and nothing is erased, there are even echoes; another story, instant, effervescent, came to be superimposed*'.¹³

11.

A 'place' can be an existing house that was bought by the developer through right of first refusal and reoccupied by the activists, or it can be self-built huts, shacks or tree houses, as we will see below.

12.

Collectif Mauvaise Troupe, (2016a) *Contrées. Histoires croisées de la ZAD de Notre-Dame-des-Landes et de la lutte No TAV dans le Val Susa*, Paris: Éditions de l'Éclat, p. 227.

13.

In translating '*Une autre histoire, rapide...*' we purposefully favoured the term 'instant' as opposed to 'quick'. This implicitly relates this approach to attempts in participative and process-driven design to generate what has been called the 'Instant History' of a new design, in Boutsen, D. (2004) 'An inclusive 'Work-Method' and a specific search for fully supported solutions through subjectoriented design (instead of object-oriented)!' in Avocaad. Delft, T. N. D. S., ed. *Local Values in a Networked Design World - Added Value of Computer Aided Architectural Design*, Delft: Delft University Press.

This has a double effect. On the one hand, it recognizes the uniqueness and freedom of each place to define and project its identity and values in space. On the other hand, it restores a living relationship with the territory through the multiplication of places, as opposed to an anonymous administrative division of the territory in zones or departments, removing the capacity of inhabitants to appropriate the territory beyond the anecdotic.

Radical openness for public space use

Until the recent clean-up operation by police forces, taking the road leading to the ZAD, one inevitably crossed the half-open barricades marking the transition to a territory whose dwellers lived in constant wariness of the day their opposition to hegemonic power might become physical again. This main access road, nicknamed '*Route des Barricades*' and later '*Route des Chicanes*', was strewn with debris, tires, and car wrecks on alternate sides of the road in order to slow access and close it if necessary. Some of the obstacles were inhabited defence posts encroaching on the road. Contrary to what this situation might suggest, the ZAD's dwellers wish it to be open to all except in periods of open conflict. Only the different inhabited 'places' (i.e. subspaces) set their own conditions between openness and privacy.

Official markings of the territory (directions or traffic signs) have mostly been erased or subverted. Appropriation and subversion combine in suggesting the creation of a counter-normality on the ZAD, which invites a new form of collective space. Tags and signs such as '*ZAD everywhere*', '*Journalists get out*' or other logos and slogans, are omnipresent signs that both showcase the ideological conditioning of the territory and more pragmatically indicate concrete usage patterns (slowing down, gathering trash) or directions. The language of these new markings is direct and informal, its materiality one of bricolage and reversibility, demonstrating a space where '*in fact, pretty much anything can be transformed according to the (occupiers') wildest desires*'.¹⁴

14.

Collectif Mauvaise Troupe, (2016a) *Contrées. Histoires croisées de la zad de Notre-Dame-des-Landes et de la lutte No TAV dans le Val Susa*, Paris: Éditions de l'Éclat, p. 282.

Territorial logic of increasing rootedness

The evolution from 'occupying' the land to 'dwelling' can be perceived in the changing and superimposition of settlement logic for both huts and plantations, which have been mapped by the cartography group of the ZAD. The first huts follow a strongly defensive logic, still perceivable in the east of the zone: huts on stilts, in water, with drawbridge, or more recently placed as inhabitable barricades on the road.

The inherent defiance of this logic extends into the second one, which favours locating buildings on the footprint of the future airport. This symbolic reconquering of the site encourages some to settle at the end of the trail, or on the contrary in the centre like the occupation of *La Rolandière*. On this site, inhabitants have set up a reception and information centre near the planned control tower of the airport, whose typology itself was subverted by the construction of a sculptural 'lighthouse', creating an overall artistic impression of the site and designating a reception area for visitors and new occupiers.

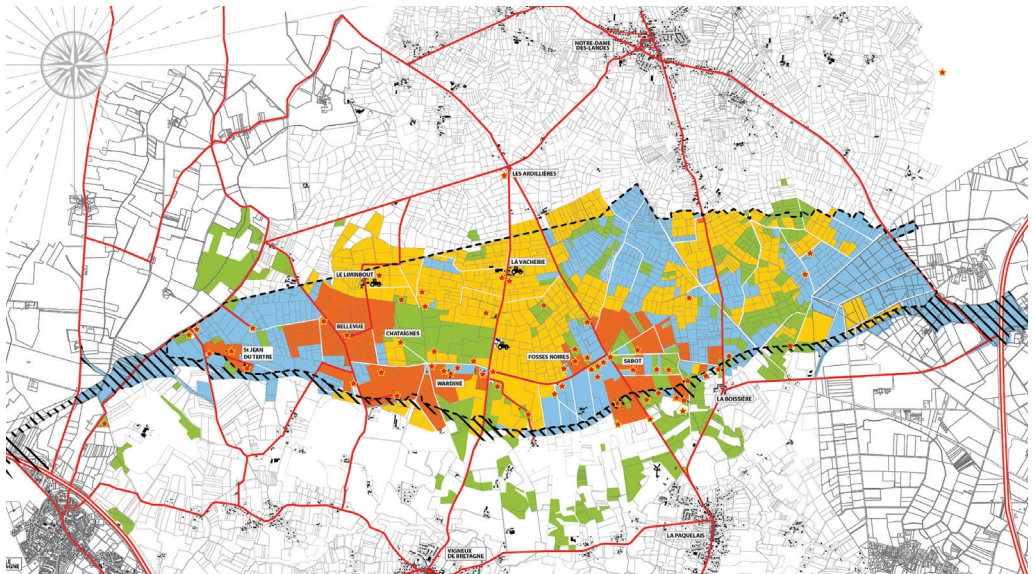
An additional layer emerged with the question of long-term occupation of the ZAD and the coexistence between occupiers and original farmers, whose mode of resistance has not been the creation of common land but on the contrary a preservation of the right to own their plot of land to cultivate. A detailed mapping of ownership was therefore realised, encouraging occupiers to use and cultivate the 800 hectares of land that were bought up by the airport developer. Out of these pieces of land, some 220 hectares are currently used by the zadists.

Finally, the underlying principle of respecting all life on site was given concrete traction through a cartography of fauna, flora and natural dynamics by a collective of naturalists, allowing for building new huts or collectives without hindering these characteristics.

A culture of 'making' set in a particular place

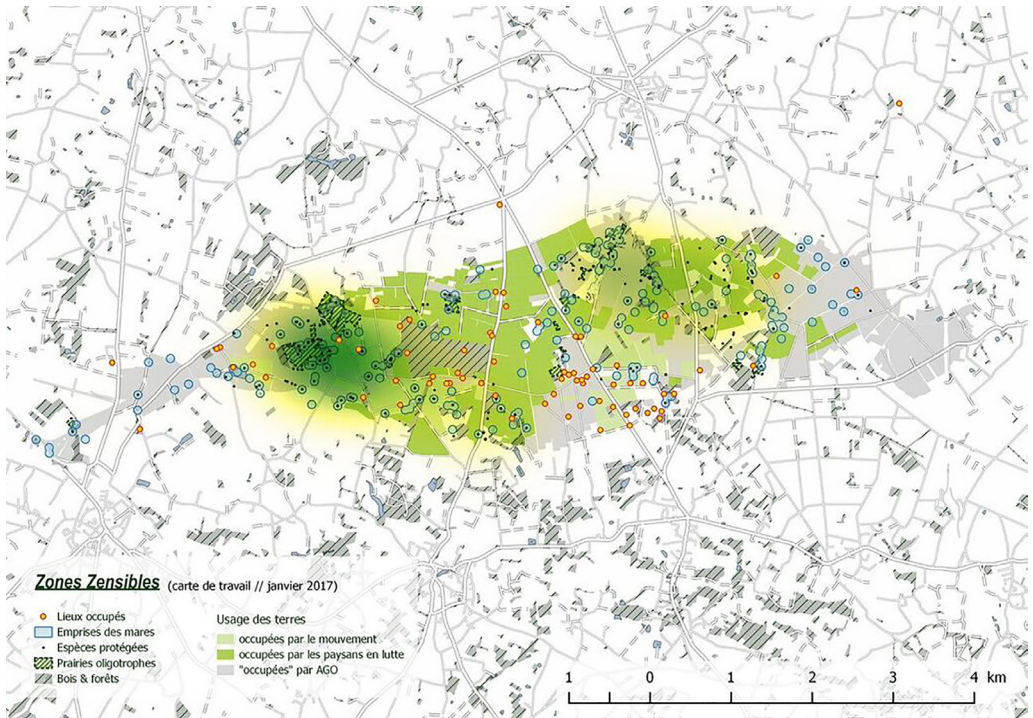
The land is home

There are now nearly 80 'places' hosting occupiers, out of which over 50 are built by the occupants. What



↑ Mapping of land ownership. In yellow are the parcels of farmers facing expropriation after refusing to settle with the developer; in orange are parcels occupied by the opponents of the airport project; in blue are the other parcels owned by the developer AGO Vinci and public authorities (source: ZAD Automedia)

↓
Map of natural dynamics, work in progress
(source: ZAD Automedia)



these places have in common is a systematic reduction of private space to its core elements, giving precedence to collectivization wherever possible. The degree and conditions of collectivization varies. This principle also applies to existing reoccupied homes and farms, the use of which is reconfigured to become the heart of a living community who share the living room, kitchen and facilities. Private living spaces are transferred from the house onto its immediate surroundings, where occupiers inhabit caravans or self-built huts, while rooms within the house become shared guestrooms to accommodate frequent visitors.

Self-construction makes use of light materials and of typologies with a reduced footprint: cabins, earthships, yurts, all either individual or collective. As an implicit criticism of the homogenization of housing into swappable normalized commodities, the normative frameworks of housing (stability, security, fire safety) are often and sometimes defiantly ignored, in favour of a multitude of idiosyncratic constructions.

This makes life on the ZAD demanding creatively and politically, as *'the choice of building materials, of tools and organisation of work, all down to the smallest detail, participate in a political positioning'*,¹⁵ but also physically. The comfort conditions are often spartan in comparison with standardized living: toilets with running water are systematically deactivated and replaced with dry toilets, heating is minimal, limited to a stove or a rocket stove. The thermal permeability of the light constructions can be the source of serious discomfort during the area's cold winters.¹⁶ The primacy of the collective also translates into limits to the individual appropriation of spaces. Inhabitants or builders of a space make no claims to explicit ownership. When they stop inhabiting their space for more than a short period, they make it available for others to inhabit, modify or extend.

15.

Pruvost, G. (2015) 'Chantiers participatifs, autogérés, collectifs: la politisation du moindre geste', *Sociologie du travail*, 57, p. 81-103.

16.

Some have no choice but to resort to individual electrical heaters in their private spaces, despite it being highly inefficient in terms of energy use.

A networked materiality

Despite the very high use value of the inhabited places, their hypothetical market value is close to zero. This is of course due to the non-standard assembly and layouts, the very limited comfort, but also the 'low-value' materials used: earth, straw, branches, discarded materials. In this context, the local territory is also rediscovered as a source of building materials, from which one can draw all of them while respecting its regenerative limits: a commons for construction materials. This is made effective, for example, through on-site walks during which the occupiers identify trees that can be cut down for lumber while providing for the well-being of the landscape. Beyond local sourcing, the ZAD also has become a node in a network of exchange and circulation of objects that have been cast out of commodity flows.¹⁷

Constructive techniques beyond invention and custom

The assembly of materials follows a wealth of different processes pertaining simultaneously to collective creativity and the reactivation of constructive traditions. Huts built on the ZAD strongly exude creativity through their morphologies and aesthetics and their builders' constructive choices. This architectural boldness was further strengthened by the feeling of victory that followed the failed police evacuation and surge of reoccupation in 2012. For some occupants this experimental environment is the opportunity to materialize some radical ecological or neo-primitive aspirations, such as building without electricity, building solely with on-site materials, or even by gleaning materials found on the ground. The same reverence for this kind of creative process applies to projects such as the *Hangar de l'Avenir*, built entirely through traditional timbering techniques, and assembled with no machines or electricity. Indeed, both creation and tradition display a strong criticism of the lack of conviviality¹⁸ within modern construction techniques.

17.

It should not be omitted that materials are also stolen from surrounding construction sites, and in extreme cases from passing vans. While this occurs rarely and to the great discontent of both the surrounding population of the ZAD and a majority of occupiers themselves, it illustrates the many difficulties of the radical horizontal and free organization of the ZAD, whose inhabitants never speak with one voice.

18.

Illich, I. (1975) *La convivialité*, Paris: Seuil.



Hangar de l'avenir during construction
(source: ZAD Automedia)

Building process as encounter

The process of building on the ZAD has a distinct relationship to knowledge and work, both kept outside the monetary exchange sphere through participative construction. Building sites are collective, informal and open to all, which abolishes the opposition between provider and customer, between salaried work and vernacular work, while the engineer, architect and jurist¹⁹ enforce the separation of manual and intellectual labour, reducing the manufacturer to a mere executor of the rules and decisions of others.

Whereas these three professionals need to preserve a certain secrecy concerning their knowledge production in order to be able to sell the results, collective construction on the ZAD becomes a moment of pollination and propagation of this expertise through discussions, observations, and experimentation. When building on the ZAD, the horizontal exchange of knowledge and the fostering of relations between participants takes precedence over efficiency and timeliness. This does not prevent forms of specialization between builders, as long as these are *'assumed and desired'* and not *'endured and perceived as alienating'*.²⁰

Moments of participative construction are announced through internal channels and constitute an activity favoured by new inhabitants in order to forge a network of interpersonal relations within the ZAD.

Configuration and management of everyday commoning

From sharing the commons to the project of autonomy

Up to this point, it is clear that the practice of pooling is a fundamental principle on the ZAD. This has led to a rather spontaneous and decentralized organisation of various commoning practices on the scale of the entire site, managed by different thematic groups

19.

Pruvost, G. (2015) 'Chantiers participatifs, autogérés, collectifs: la politisation du moindre geste', *Sociologie du travail*, 57, 81-103.

20.

Anonymous (2015a) 'Ebauches pour la commune', <http://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article4393> [online], available: [Accessed 3 March 2017].

(vegetables, cereals, conserving, etc.). The organisation of these commons takes very distinct forms. The often spontaneous decision-making bears the risk of some initiatives turning out to be unmanageable.²¹ Many, however, are remarkably efficient, such as the library or the two bakeries producing bread for the whole population of the ZAD out of partially self-produced grain. With the realization of the potential held by these various initiatives, and the possibility of a life here beyond airport opposition, the occupiers started perceiving their commons as '*infrastructures of autonomy*',²² promoting the prospect of an autonomous NDDL commune by fostering both independence from the outside world and a strong internal cohesion.²³

Communal works

These reflections on a longer-term future have given new impetus to a dynamic of communal works and quarterly events during which '*the daily course of events is suspended so that all can devote themselves to maintaining and building what is most widely shared*'²⁴. streets, paths, hedges, electrical installations, water intakes, garbage areas, a drinking fountain, etc. These events are also an opportunity to combine work on smaller exterior accommodations within the various collectives on the ZAD. Such was the case during the '*Tender for the Construction of a Future without an Airport*'²⁵ during which some 800 supporters came to help the occupiers on some 25 refurbishment projects throughout the ZAD.

21.

This was for example the case for a launderette project that was very short-lived due to a lack of rigour and of (an) explicit project carrier(s).

22.

Anonymous (2014b) 'De la ZAD aux Communaux?', <https://constellations.boum.org/spip.php?article132> [online], available: [Accessed 20 March 2017].

23.

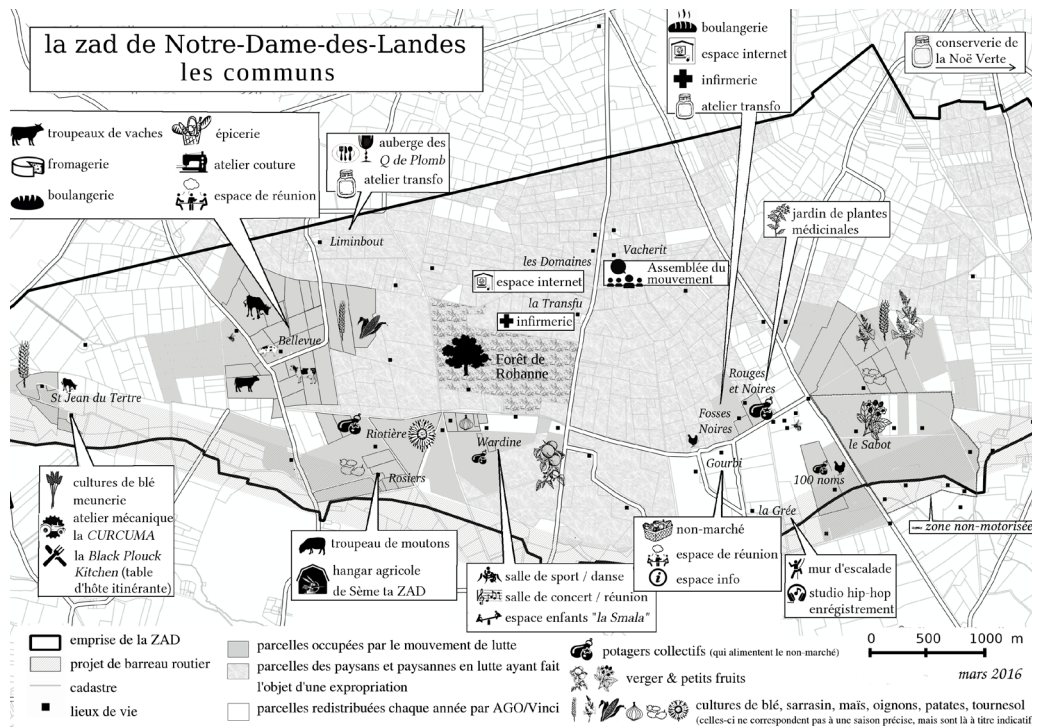
Anonymous (2015b) 'Les 6 points pour l'avenir de la ZAD. Parce qu'il n'y aura pas d'aéroport', <https://constellations.boum.org/spip.php?article196> [online], available: [Accessed 3 March 2017].

24.

Anonymous (2017) 'Invitation à la première Journée des 4 saisons', *ZAD News*, 20(March), 20-27.

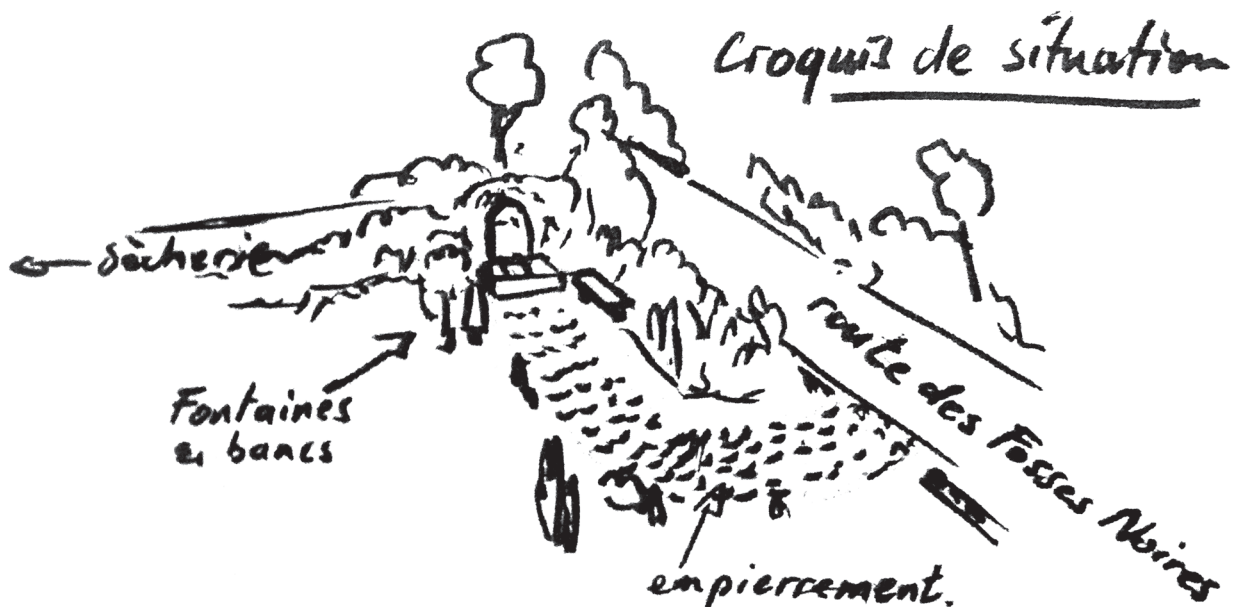
25.

An event held on 30-31 January 2016.



↑
Mapping of the commons
(source: Mauvaise Troupe, 2016)

↓
Sketch for a drinking fountain
(source: ZAD News, 20-27 March 2017)



This effervescence gradually takes on a more solidified shape. The increased investments in terms of effort, materials and time bring forth more perennial constructions for the commons. These are diverse: the creation of an inn by extending the existing house of one of the long-term inhabitants; the construction of two large sheds – in metal and wood respectively – to store equipment, hold meetings and serve as an agricultural infrastructure in the future; and lastly the aforementioned lighthouse, a vertical ode to collective capacity whose purpose is also a symbolic change in the public perception of the ZAD, all too often limited to belligerent barricades.

An invitation to communal luxury

It is by the stratification of these, and numerous other non-spatial practices, that a radically common territory gradually takes shape in NDDL. Despite the precariousness of their situation, the occupiers were able to experiment with ways of living and socio-spatial organisation patterns they see as prefiguring a different society, based on principles of ecology, autonomy, horizontal self-management and sharing. As we have seen, practices of dwelling on the ZAD offer a particular articulation of self-limitation and self-liberation, pertaining respectively, one could say, to the subject and use of space. Simplicity and self-constraint within environmental limits on territorial and material levels contrasts with the exuberance and radical freedom to define one's living conditions on an architectural level.

These combined elements converge in an aesthetic experience deeply rooted in the perception and knowledge of the rich processes that have led to the final result. Some occupiers have found resonance in the notion of '*communal luxury*'²⁶ formulated during the Paris Commune, as a vision of culture that no longer dissociates the useful and the beautiful, the artistic and the artisanal, but on the contrary identifies the aesthetic potential residing in any act upon the environment

26.

Ross, K. (2015) *Communal Luxury, The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune*, London: Verso Books.

in the broadest sense. A vision of art as inseparable from everyday life, which everyone has the right to participate in and to enjoy.

This extension of artistic understanding to the everyday does not signify banalization; on the contrary, 'artistry' can transpire in every act. Creative, extraordinary architecture is appreciated and encouraged, not least because, as one occupier informally expressed it, 'people have to lose it' upon seeing the ZAD. The architecture calls upon emotions as an instrument of their struggle, as it conveys a seductive, romantic imaginary of a possible other world, of a life of freedom interacting with the environment. *'The poetry of the ZAD, the sense of 'magic' it inspires, expresses a reversal in the collective imagination: it is no longer the planes [of the airport the State planned to build on this area] that make us dream'.²⁷*

Conclusion and prospects

In this article, we have seen how, by having radically taken power over their environment, from how it is named and marked to how it is constructed and shared and guided by strong, often radical ecological principles, ZAD inhabitants have created their own territoriality, complete with its localized dwelling practices. A new kind of vernacular has taken shape, which radically questions sustainability as a performance-based normativity, all the while remaining otherwise open to a wide variety of sometimes contradictory interpretations of what it means to live with respect for the earth's limitations.

In this manner, the land of the ZAD acts both as a commons in itself and as the carrier of many other commoning practices, spatial or otherwise. Building and living on the ZAD is an act of commoning, through the social horizontality of the building process as much as the spatial relationship to land, in which the architecture often does not 'break' ground but barely touches it, as if to emphasize the predominance of its continuum over whichever built form is placed upon it.

²⁷
Kempf, H. (2014) *Notre-Dame-des-Landes*, Paris: Seuil, p. 84.

The spaces themselves interact with the outside, the woods, fields and grasslands making up the main living space of the occupiers. On the ZAD more explicitly than anywhere else, dwelling can never be limited to the home, it is an ever shifting mesh of connections to the human and non-human others that constitute the territory.

It is necessary however to dispense with any sense of spontaneity or communitarian romanticism which could be derived from the observations above. Despite the richness of the processes put in place, the autonomy project of the ZAD is still at an early stage in a long undertaking. Far from being a dogma, it is a pragmatic and evolving experiment, which today is still largely contingent upon recuperation, tapping of water and electricity, support networks nationwide, and a significant turnover of the inhabitants who often reside only temporarily on the ZAD, investing their savings or government subsidy and their time in the concretization of this project.²⁸

In the short course of this article, I was able but to hint at some of the many more questions that can be raised concerning the described practices of dwelling. What is the place of ZAD for people who do not have the strength or the extroversion to give constant expression to their desires and opinions? What about the inability of the occupiers, in their rejection of representativeness, to condemn publicly individual acts that are considered harmful by the collective? Also, the balancing act between defending and welcoming, between the fear of being assimilated through insufficient separation and the fear of creating an 'alternative ghetto', is an extremely complex question I could not address within the scope of this article. These fundamental issues are very much present in the many instances and discussion on the ZAD, and none minimizes the difficulty of their resolution. However, it is equally essential to prevent these contradictions from prematurely shutting down the still fragile prospects opened by the social, spatial and political experimentation carried out at NDDL. Moreover, credit could be given to the slow, artisanal undertaking of the collective capacities to deal with the tensions between the respect

28.

In view of this need to be nurtured from outside, the proximity of the ZAD to Nantes has been and currently remains a decisive asset for its maintenance and development.

The lighthouse during construction
(source: author)



for each individual and a collective identity. In the transition from a mere occupation to an encompassing act of dwelling, which I have attempted to sketch here, one could say the designation as '*zone to be defended*' has itself shifted in meaning. While it remains a space the occupiers wish to defend against the market and growth economy, it can also designate a place where the imagination and experimentations through concrete practices of a life within planetary limits should themselves be defended and allowed to bear fruit.

Editor's Note

The following article was researched and written in 2016. As such, it has not integrated more recent developments in the case of Notre-Dame-des-Landes: the airport project being abandoned by public authorities in January 2018 due the sustained tensions around it ; the following large-scale targeted eviction of "more radical" activists that were not meeting the negotiation terms of the State in April ; and finally the difficult and technical struggle between the questions of land ownership and the careful recognition of the commoning practices in agriculture put in place by the activists, ongoing today. However, the descriptions and analyses contained in the article retain all of their relevance in the study and understanding of this case.

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Sustain(habit)able

Towards a skilful production of dwelling

Boris Nauleau

Due to strict economic constraints, housing often lacks the qualities required to turn a house into a home. While budgetary issues often prevail in building developments, these missing qualities are essential in the long run, especially when dwellings are considered from the perspective of sustainable design.

In the case of individual as well as collective housing, new schemes can be developed to recover this missing dimension of home. In individual housing, it can be found in complementary and often incompletely built spaces which can be used in the short and long term. These additional spaces enable a dwelling to evolve and be transformed by its inhabitants. In the case of collective and rather participatory housing, new, shared spaces are offered to the residents. The spaces become the natural extensions of the abode. Hence, the definition of the dwelling lies in between its private core and its communal extensions. The residents play an active role in conceiving their dwelling whether the latter is individual or collective.

Following in the footsteps of Lacaton and Vassal by offering extra spaces to the dweller, *Claas architectes* reflect on their work of the past decade. Through a series of minute observations, they offer the dweller a sense of desired habitability that questions the conventional notion of housing.



The current production of collective housing in France seems to be limited to a financing of 'products' that overlooks the fundamental qualities of living spaces. While housing meets the minimum requirements in line with prevailing standards, it usually fails to provide the additional 'soul' conducive to personal development within society. The building industry's powerful economic drive, due to the mechanisms of tax exemption, has produced real estate consisting of small, poorly built and expensive housing units.

Collective housing is not desirable, and even nowadays, despite the economic and ecological crises, the individual house remains the predominant aspiration among French households. If today the experiences of shared and/or participatory housing are topical (beyond the architectural sphere), that is because they manage to synthesize, within the dwelling, the residents' desires and financial constraints. This type of housing also sheds light on a triple movement, namely the empowerment of professional actors, the inhabitants' participation and the comprehensibility of the political message (thanks to the attention that is paid to the idea of commons). For the architects involved in the process of this form of participatory housing, the project is set on a path of creation and emergence for the benefit of users. This work is generally different from the usual architectural practice, since it requires transdisciplinary skills integrating user intelligence and reconsidering the traditional decision-making process from design to construction. *'Choosing an alternative requires a trained critical mind and the audacity to take a risk without being sure of the outcome.'*¹

The Japanese architect Sou Fujimoto² invokes the image of the nest and 'nesting' as a way of ensuring that daily life and the real world can coexist within an inhabited architectural space. In this image lies an essential dimension of the architecture of dwelling spaces:

1.
Author's translation, Paquot, T., Masson-Zanussi, Y. and Stathopoulos, M. (2012) *Alterarchitectures Manifesto: Observatory of Innovative Architectural and Urban Processes in Europe*, Gollion: Eterotopia.

2.
Definition of nesting, Fujimoto, S. and Worrall, J. (2009) *Sou Fujimoto, 2G*, Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, p. 135.

the idea of accompanying the inhabitants in their residential history. Architecture is a vector of this desired habitability. Fujimoto's quest for habitability transforms the ways housing is designed and built and can be a key for sustainability. This sustainability can take place in different contexts, but its common feature is that it allows a form of personal expression and the acquisition of dwelling skills within a shared social environment.

This paper explores the construction experiments Claas *architectes* have carried out over the past ten years by confronting the issue of vernacular appropriation and developing 'erudite' architecture. These experiments are anchored in the exploration of inexpensive individual houses and participatory housing. In these projects, the construction of complementary residential spaces have offered a high degree of flexibility and freedom in the dwellings. Today, similar positions are emerging in metropolitan productions³ and constitute an environment prior to housing itself. Such 'institutional' acceptance can be seen as validating a desire to bring together different elements of a community, from its neighbourhood to individual housing. This contribution seeks to explore spatial, structural and social strategies that can bring the concept of sustainability into collective housing. It is a matter of recognising spaces as supports for polyvalence and empowerment.

House

As young architects, the first projects we were able to qualify for were individual houses in peri-urban or rural areas in and around Nantes. It was obvious that people had an interest in their homes and in the place where they live. In a certain sense, this is especially true when they have gone so far as to call in an architect, but, in reality, what interests them is having a large living room and a walk-in shower – in other words, the mental image of a comfortable architect-designed house, engendering

3.

The project files of the *Ile de Nantes* urban project contain a list of sustainability figures to be explored according to the guidelines given to each project by the designers. In this way, the Franck Boutté consulting firm allows architects to change their design beyond ambient conformism.

a muted demand. In many cases, designing a house becomes an essentially technical job, which consists of placing rooms together, one after the other. In this particular context, how can one conceive qualitative architecture, caught between financial constraints and muted demand?

Designing a home means thinking of the places to which we have come to live. Not just for tomorrow, but the long term. *'There is always something to be done in a house'*, is a popular expression, as if echoing the principle of nesting brought by Fujimoto and the ability of inhabitants to develop their environment. Sustainability cannot be reduced to technical matters; it must be a means of transforming relationships between residents and the spaces they inhabit.

It is in the course of several concrete projects that this conception of space was developed. If each project tells a particular story, together they make it possible to establish a strategic approach to the sustainable design of housing. As our experiences of individual houses increased, so did budgetary limitations. Indeed, the cost of the land has become an increasingly large part of the overall budget allocated to any project. In addition, thermal standards have raised construction costs. The owners should not be told that everything is possible, but rather be presented with a clear explanation of what is feasible and how it will be done.

Projects become a matter of explaining that choices must be made, introducing a notion of temporality into the projects. Hence, the result is neither immediate nor definitive, but remains to be determined by future developments. There is a need to differentiate the immediate costs of the project and its transformability, which induces a reflection on the long-term cost of the building. The constrained budget becomes the support for a definition of sustainability where spaces are designed to evolve and designers must anticipate the evolution of both the household and its ways of life. Budgetary limitations are actually a useful tool, as one has to focus on what is essential so the project can be implemented without appearing 'undressed'. It is also

an astounding driving force of architectural reflection, since finding suitable, rational and economic solutions as well as potential uses and comfort forces the architects to be dynamic and search constantly for innovative solutions.

Fundamentally, budget constraints force us to rethink the issue of housing and conceive less conventional ways of living, which the future inhabitants might not accept if they had a bigger budget. Housing is no longer seen as a finished product that one buys with options, like a car. Residents are forced to project themselves into interactions with their future built environment, in order to make choices. Regulations, standards (technical or social) and thermal comfort are rethought based on the way the inhabitants feel in the place and express this feeling. The spectrum of habitat typologies thus becomes infinitely richer through interactions with the inhabitants.

In the case of the Atlantic coast, this attitude materialises in the application of an additional layer onto the dwelling. In many cases, it is a veranda or winter garden, which meets this projection of the resident's specifications. The heated and 'comfortable' space becomes a minimal living cell with, or without, a play on the plan and the volume, while the 'additional' space becomes an overflowing place. This overflow is retroactive because it reinterrogates the relationship that the inhabitants have with their dwelling and their way of investing it: it acts as an efficient critical mirror.

This architectural approach is built around the spatial generosity of the living spaces through various experiments with wooden construction. Vast structures were implemented at a reasonable cost. They offer, within these additional volumes, various spaces that respond to diverse appropriations and uses. Thus, the traditional timber framework, which every carpenter has mastered, allows the constitution of a hall large enough to accommodate a house at a very low cost. In the design stage, the definition of an appropriate volume needs to be defined, allowing elements of comfort on the one hand (volume, light, view, etc.) and potential appropriations of the spaces on the other hand (support of uses).

Around this issue of appropriate volume, several constructive and architectural strategies have been defined, ranging from the principle of extension to that of the box in a box. Interestingly, there is the desire to consider the interface of the architecture with its user as a human and carnal relationship to the built space, a sensitive relationship that changes with the seasons. These simple and immediate living spaces are attentive to their users and their environment. Hence, the role of the architects is to pay particular attention to how the project fits into its environment, and to combine it with the inhabitants' way of life.

The choice of building materials, the apparent expression of the structure and the layout of the plan allow for a gentle appropriation of the architecture. The residents set up their own project around the pre-established programme, which brings dynamism and unexpectedness.

Architecture is a setting in which inhabitants and users can flourish, and with which they can maintain a fusional relationship. Ultimately, what emerges from the project is the feeling of being at home. Not an enclosing and excluding 'home', but a shared 'home', a welcoming and gathering place.

The architectural space should have a dynamic and living definition, within which the users can bring their own vision. Inhabitants should take part in the conception of their own living space. The space should be used to maintain a framework of complex relationships between what has been experienced, what the future could bring and the contingencies of the present time. Setting up this framework makes the project successful and transforms the dwelling space into a relaxing venue, which relates to 'going to the countryside'. Hence, such projects can be defined as pieces of countryside, because the resulting atmosphere is that of a holiday home in which one feels a gently familiar atmosphere.

This DNA of the individual house must be preserved, through minute attention to outdoor spaces, views, light and quality of the spaces. The goal is to preserve this knowledge of fitting together into one space the complex and contradictory desires of clients, to be generous and



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'Loft de l'Ouest': the courtyard made up of traditional timber frameworks creates a second living space, which spontaneously duplicates the plan of the house
 (source: author)

↓
'La Maison du Marais': the living space is extended by a two-floor winter garden, the attic was built by the inhabitants after they moved in
 (source: author)



benevolent and to enhance this human adventure. A retrospective examination of the office work allows for critical reflection on housing. Each project leaves a trace, and though each is different and has its own story, similarities can be found in the strategies. The result is a vision in constant evolution of the same fundamental question: the individual house seen as a complex experimental prototype of a dwelling mode.

Houses

In the media's language, computer piracy is often mistaken for hacking, which could also be understood as 'snooping' or 'tinkering with'. The hacker is not an inventor but works from existing systems that he or she explores and modifies according to his or her needs. The hacker observes, understands and modifies the systems that surround him or her. By the hackability⁴ of an object, tool, or material, he or she defines its capacity to be diverted from its original vocation.

The verb 'to hack' designates the action of breaking down data and reassembling it by eliminating everything that is not strictly necessary, in order to regain a more easily accessible coherence. Beyond the 'technical' aspect, hacker ethics are defined by values of passion, play, pleasure, exchange and sharing. In his book *The Hacker Ethic*,⁵ Pekka Himanen talks about the 'Hacker Attitude' in comparison to the rock'n'roll attitude. For him, hackers are the driving force of a social mutation and hacking is a post-industrial mode of production based on openness and sharing.

This logic of dismemberment and tinkering has allowed us to find economic solutions in our individual housing projects. 'Hacking' is also carried out from one project to the next, part of one serving as a basis for another, musings from a competition that provides food for thought for a concrete project, etc. The phases of research

4.

Hackability has been particularly focused on by Tristan Ninot in his blog: <http://standblog.org/blog/>.

5.

Himanen, P. (2001) *The Hacker Ethic and the Spirit of the Information Age*, New York: Exils.

resonate with the act of building, each domain bringing its share of expertise and analyses for a retroactive and reactive design practice. But this dimension of hacking also makes it possible to move from a logic of individual houses to a logic of grouped housing (or participatory housing), a kind of housing situated on the fringe of the dominant market of the accession to housing in France.

Indeed, the search for economic and ecological housing is still a delicate balance. Land cost makes some individual housing projects more expensive. In this perspective, how much can we reduce the size of building plots in order to fulfil the dream of private ownership? This situation, which makes it difficult to gain access to housing property, also blocks residential journeys. The sharing of land or the renovation of several buildings allows for economies of scale, but makes the structuring of the projects more complex. Since the end of post-war reconstruction in France, three major forms have dominated the real estate market: the individual home, social housing and private real estate (within which there is little home ownership). These three forms exist and strive in a societal framework allowed by banking organisations, as few people or organisations are able to circumvent the banking systems to settle their built heritage. However, since the 1930s legal statutes have been created to allow civil societies to be constituted with the ability to carry out a real estate project, based on the financial capacity of each member.⁶ They make it possible to pool the financial means of several households to form a group capable of buying a property or a piece of land to build on together.

The ideologies of associative grouped housing have been re-emerging for some time. These are the so-called 'alternative modes of production', which fit between collective building and individual dwelling. Yet they represent a concrete and serious alternative to the housing supply, where the architect has a more important role (5 to 7% of the market share in France). In these operations, users take an active part in designing their own housing while taking into account collective and urban necessities.

6.

For example, the acquisition or construction of a real estate complex, meant to be divided into fractions, to be attributed to the owners.

'L'architecture est dans le Pré': the house is fully enclosed in a wide and transparent volume; doubling the height of the 'barn' allows for a twofold increase in house size.
(source: author)



In these projects, beyond the definition of housing, the very fact of living together takes up a great deal of discussion and debate. It is interesting to see that individual and collective dimensions are advancing at the same time, that people can be in their own home while creating their neighbourhood framework. The architectural project is superimposed on a social project which, for some, anticipates their ageing process, and for others serves to co-opt their neighbourhood, etc. The dwelling is not written as a definite outline within a built geometry but defined as a shifting contour of social uses and interactions. In the course of meetings and debates with the future inhabitants, the outlines of these uses and interactions develop; the future neighbours, as soon as they meet, develop an efficient management where services are exchanged, turning former strangers into a group of active citizens.

On an architectural scale, it is the definition of common spaces as well as the 'paths' to one's dwelling that formalise the communal living areas. The figures of the corridor, the hall, the bike hall, the courtyard and the communal garden are taken up and diverted from their original uses. The latter function as 'extra spaces' but on the scale of a small community. In fact, participatory housing projects involve the implementation of a negotiated architecture and a shared-use project. In order to clarify their specific dynamics, a glossary of the architectural arrangements used in the development of these projects can be developed.

Support for common areas

While open spaces (garden, central courtyard, distribution patio, etc.) have a hard time finding an adequate position in a classic condominium system, they become opportunities for appropriation for the future inhabitants in participatory housing. Meeting spaces, recreational spaces, shared amenities: these common areas are taken care of and offer multiple uses at different times. Their management is subject to debate, which falls under the regulation of joint ownership or a charter of use.

Project benefits

For these common areas, ownership is shared. DIY workshop, laundry room, etc., are among the many dedicated spaces that offer an extension to the individual dwellings. This common property can sometimes extend to the creation of a small supplementary accommodation, a 'guest room', which is a remarkable asset and an interesting financial counterpart when it comes to communal construction.

Sharing points of view

The example of the gallery-balcony is quite edifying. Indeed, whereas in classical building, a distributing external space is assimilated to an undesirable promiscuity (passage in front of the dwellings, possible frictions in the passageway, etc.), in the case of participatory housing, it is accepted from the start as a meeting place, a shared environment. Its uses are organized and discussed with thoughtfulness.

Project identity

The shared production of a project often leads its inhabitants into a desire to symbolize common ownership. To enhance its collective nature, inhabitants tend to extend the project and improve its common areas (painting the collective hall, building benches, creating a fence, etc.). This identity issue is also reflected in the organization of open-house days for the neighbourhood, with the clear intention of bringing the shared project to everyone's attention. These communal spaces can be added without any additional costs when compared to conventional housing. This is due to a new overall financial equilibrium where intermediation charges of traditional developers can be spared.⁷

Each dwelling corresponds to what its occupant expects of it. But rather than including or anticipating within its living space everything that could possibly be required, the common areas tend to respond to anything unexpected, random events and whims. Individually,

7.

Developers earn ridiculously high profits from building, up to 20%. Boer, R. and Minkjan, M. (2016) *Self-Builds: Between Unruly Real Estate Markets and Failed Housing Policies*, International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam, unpublished.

each inhabitant reduces his/her housing, investing more, in return, in the common areas. These common spaces can be places for individual practices that are difficult to develop within the individual realm (due to noise, for example), but can also host practices (e.g. music) that used to be individual and become shared because of the collective identity of the spaces. Importantly, regardless of the size of the dwelling in which one lives, from the studio to the loft, within the condominium everyone accesses these spaces in the same way. While in the individual house, one speaks of volume logic to replace that of the plan, in the case of participatory housing, the 'enclosed space' plan is supplanted by a logic of an atomic structure of housing. People inhabit their own space, included as part of a populated environment of shared spaces.

The 'service' offered by the communal spaces makes it possible to accommodate the developments of different households and their lifestyles. The resulting decompartmentalization sensation of housing is important because it allows the dwelling to open up to its nearby and distant environments. Negotiated housing systems are useful for inhabitants, but also for cities. They directly respond to a current challenge of urban renewal by questioning the dynamics of housing construction (intermediate housing), allowing the reconquest of abandoned spaces that escape the interests of conventional developers, and offer a new regulatory tool of a densification which could be the subject of a new negotiated form. On an architectural scale, communal living becomes a central condition, by initiating practices within the projects and co-ownership schemes for shared and/or communal spaces. Finally, it offers architectural innovation based on combined and original layouts and programmes. These experiments are rich in meaning, since they are supported by the combined and benevolent view of users and policies. Architecture comes to fruition in this synthesis, because it is in tune with society and its contemporary issues.



'La Boîte Noire': the central entrance space is located at the crossroads of the inhabitants routes to their private dwelling and the common areas; its layout (covered and open) allows for meetings, informal talking and organizing events (source: author)



'Colmar': the vast gallery is proposed as 'special common areas', thresholds are wide, extensions are shared, and the use of this passageway is as much negotiated as it is individualized (source: author)



Housing

In this text, we have tried to highlight the design qualities of what we consider to be sustainable housing, that is to say responsive and dynamic housing. It was through scales of limited projects that this conception was expressed (from one to seven housing units). But these qualities are preserved at greater scales. Indeed, the generosity developed on smaller and individual housing projects remains the main concern, especially in participatory housing.

What is troubling in a collective housing design brief is the absolute banality of the demand. It comes back to the first issue: a financially constrained context and muted demand. However, in these projects, interlocutors are less inclined than in individual housing to accept the mechanisms of long-term logic of housing transformation. While architects such as Lacaton and Vassal have succeeded in breaking a gap in the normative context of collective housing (in social housing) and have taken a leading role, the conventional form of housing remains 'commonly accepted' and barely questioned.

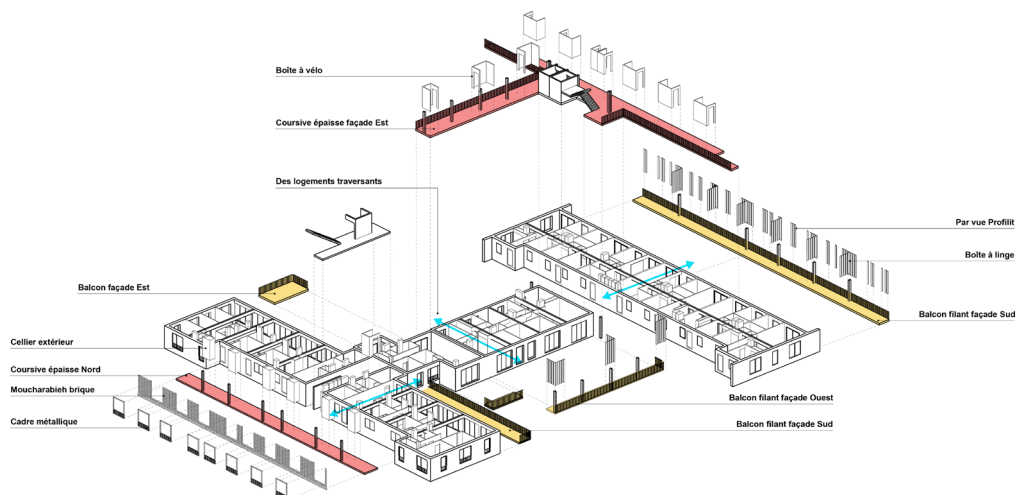
It is at the urban scale that the issue of housing and its sustainability is sometimes presented. This is the case for the *Ile de Nantes* project where the sustainability figures issued by Franck Boutté Consultants make it possible to highlight new notions such as evolving housing and common and shared spaces as answers to building new housing configurations. From project to project, operators seem to modify their proposals and programmes by orienting themselves towards this type of approach. As architects, we try to make the collective desirable, and to think beyond the unit of the apartment. For a collective building is a microcosm that balances the intimate and the common, proximity (being with others) and the possibility of isolating oneself, the inside and the outside. By offering extra spaces, private or shared, dwelling possibilities are increased, and residents can live beyond their apartments.

The atomic dimension of housing is reinvented, because the living environment is not reduced to the four walls of the housing unit. It is defined by interactions that are



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'La Boîte Noire': the extra room in the project allows for a collective use that symbolizes group living (meetings, meals, music, children's playground, etc.) and for inhabitants to have a guest room; it can open up to the outside world by proposing an activity to the public (source: author)

↓
'Ilot 1': floor axonometric showing the associated spaces of the housing: circulations, external storage, terraces, etc. (source: author)



created with all the spaces available to the inhabitants on the one hand and with other users on the other hand. A kind of porosity and continuity is created between the logics of public space and the organization of collective buildings. While housing is generally the same, it is included in a richer environment that takes into account the various routes that lead to its front door, which offers shared outdoor spaces and spaces accessible by all within the built space. All these spaces are thought of in a three-dimensional logic of the building in order not to stigmatize housing units. Design is not a superposition of slices of housing directly next to each other, but the expression of home routes and uses at all levels.

The scheme of the street and design of thresholds become key elements that integrate the individual housing with its building, the neighbourhood and the city. At an individual level, housing sustainability is expressed in terms of its ability to support evolutions and overflows. At the group level, the shared places allow the design of a dynamic and friendly building complex. At the society level, the ability to structure shared public spaces in a three-dimensional way ensures sustainability in uses and spaces. These two aspects are inseparable because they induce intermediate density strong enough to induce intensity but largely aerated to allow for a less stressful relationship to the exterior space, the natural world and the city.

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Empowerment at the heart of housing production

The community land trust model

Thomas Dawance

Empowerment is a vector of sustainability in housing. This article attempts to verify this hypothesis based on a study of historical developments in the notion of empowerment and the community land trust (CLT) model as a model of land management and social housing construction.

The article traces the interwoven development of these two notions, which originated in the US, then analyses the Community Land Trust Brussels (CLTB) project in more detail. The article presents the background to the model's recent appearance in Europe, recorded in *Le retour des communs*, and attempts to establish which concept of empowerment it is based on in order to evaluate to what extent it can be seen as a sustainable housing production model.

On a global scale the CLT currently appears to mobilize members' will for empowerment to varying degrees, fluctuating between a radical and community viewpoint in the context of the defence of the inhabitants of informal settlements to a more generalized and individualistic neo-liberal viewpoint in the case of some recent American CLTs.

The specific study of the CLTB will establish the motivation of a socio-liberal concept of empowerment and the outlook for its development will be examined in conclusion.

Introduction

One of the publication's two premises states that a housing model can be considered sustainable if it sufficiently enables the empowerment of current and future occupants, that is to say, it *'supports a free identity and interdependence among individuals, social groups and generations without the constraints of being assigned to a single role'*.¹

In addition to this definition of empowerment, this article aims to study the historical relations between empowerment and the CLT model. As we will see, their stories are interwoven. The article retraces the evolution of these two notions from their American origins and then undertakes a more detailed analysis of the Community Land Trust Brussels (CLTB) project. The article presents the background to the model's recent appearance in Europe and tries to pinpoint which specific conception of empowerment it follows in order to estimate to what extent it can be considered a production model for this type of sustainable housing.

Three contrasting visions of empowerment

Several authors identify three main visions of empowerment.² We will briefly summarize them as well as the community social work movements to which they are generally linked:

First, when it was created in the United States in the 1960s, the notion of empowerment was based on the individual and collective self-determination and emancipation of the oppressed. It assumes the acquisition of power and aims at social transformation, acquisition of political rights and the redistribution of resources. It is 'radical acquiring', transformative and eminently *bottom-up*. This view is often linked with 'community organizing', community

1.
Ledent, G., Salembier, C. and Vanneste, D. (2019) 'Sustainable Dwelling' in Ledent, G., Salembier, C. and Vanneste, D., eds., *Sustainable Dwelling. Between Polyvalence and Empowerment*, Louvain-La-Neuve: PUL.

2.
Bacqué, M.-H. and Biewener, C. (2015) *L'empowerment, une pratique émancipatrice ?*, Paris: La Découverte.

social work which postulates, notably with Alinski and Frei, the necessity for radical or even conflictual organization by the oppressed to acquire real power for social change.

Second, the notion of empowerment evolved in the 1990s to describe 'social liberal' or 'social democratic' empowerment. More 'top-down', it is benevolent, restorative empowerment, gained through power which is freely given rather than seized. It aims to compensate those most in need as a consequence of market failures and lift barriers to the use of rights. This viewpoint is often associated with 'community development'. For certain authors,³ community development services and programmes are precisely the consensual fruit of the previous struggles between the radical structures of community organizing with the institutions of power. Social liberal empowerment encourages individual and collective initiatives and accompanies the arrival of 'community building' actions, which are about building strong relationships within the community rather than confrontation.

Third, more recently, since 2010, the notion has taken on a neo-liberal character in contradiction to previous visions. Emphatically 'top-down', it aims much more for the status quo than for social change. Emancipation is only on an individual basis, depoliticized and apparently justifying the disengagement of public stakeholders. It is based on being the 'entrepreneur of one's own life'. It is an extension of market values to social policies and institutions. Taking community anchorage away from empowerment, this notion is associated with models of social organisation founded on notions such as capacity building and capacity development. It is clear from the outset that the neo-liberal vision of empowerment does not correspond to the vision chosen for judging the sustainability of a housing model. Indeed, it only has individual ambition and reinforces the assignation of the social roles of underprivileged populations. The first two visions correspond at different levels of intensity.

3.

Hess, D. R. (1999) 'Community Organizing, Building and Developing: Their Relationship to Comprehensive Community Initiatives', *COMM-ORG: The On-line Conference on Community Organizing and Development*. [online], available: <http://comm-org.wisc.edu/papers.html>

Empowerment and CLT, an interwoven history

Common ground: the civil rights movement

For the most part the notion of empowerment spread in the context of the fight for civil rights by black people in the United States. The CLT was born in the same context. In 1970, New Communities Inc. (Albany, Georgia) was the first CLT initiative and resulted in black people finally being able to possess agricultural land communally in the United States.⁴ The first two features of a CLT were put in place: communal land ownership and representatives from neighbouring territories in decision-making bodies (to offset the hostility of the surrounding white communities).

Drawing its inspiration from many sources, this project resulted from a meeting between Bob Swann, a militant for peace, and Slater King, a cousin of Martin Luther King. They were mainly inspired by the Gramdan movement, which evolved from the Boodan movement (land giving) initiated by Gandhi. The civil rights movement and Gandhism were the two origins shared by the CLT and the notion of radical empowerment.

Contribution of liberation theology

The 1980s saw the emergence of the first urban CLTs. They fostered stronger links with Catholic worker circles and with community development experiments. The model then acquired its third feature: the desire to allow the least fortunate to benefit from the model via the fight against the increased cost of housing. It was during this period that anti-speculative measures to perpetuate affordable social housing were integrated into CLTs, bringing a cross-generational dimension to the model's empowerment project.

A paradigm shift gradually took place: from a radical viewpoint based on the seizure of power by the oppressed, it turned towards a more socio-liberal

4.

For a retrospective reading of the history of this founding struggle, watch the documentary: Cohen, H. and Lipman, M. (2017) *Arc of Justice. The Rise Fall and Rebirth of a Beloved Community*, San Francisco, New Day Films.



New Communities Inc.

LITTLE FARMERS MARKET

MEATS AND GROCERIES

viewpoint based on empowerment. In the words of the liberation theology of the period, the CLT showed 'a favourable bias towards the poor' by supporting people and their communities through the lifelong stewardship of affordable homes.

Certain urban CLTs of that period developed within the framework of the larger community development corporation (CDC) movement of which they were a technical land control device in support of their global community development⁵ strategy.

Expansion of the model, municipalization and territorial expansion

In 1992 CLTs were enshrined in US law,⁶ thus providing access to federal financing. The model spread on a larger scale and the number of CLTs exploded, from fewer than ten in 1982, to 120 in 2000, to 240 in 2010.

This surge in numbers was accompanied by a hybridization in the nature of CLTs, which increased their efficiency, productivity and outreach, but resulted in a lessening of their historical features, including community empowerment. This was particularly threatened by the two following new tendencies:

The first threat was the municipalization of CLT formation. More and more local governments supported and financed CLTs, seeing an opportunity to implement a more responsible fiscal policy in the context of the Reagan era's federal disengagement with regard to housing. By doing this, 'the municipalities often focus[ed] only on the housing aspect of CLTs to the detriment of local community empowerment actions'.⁷ Community involvement in governing CLTs was often diminished.

5.

It is notably the case of CLT 'Dudley Neighbours Incorporated' (1988) linked to CDC 'Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative' (DSNI) of Boston, whose documentary film (Lipman, M. (2013) *Gaining Ground: Building Community on Dudley Street*, San Francisco: New Day Films.

6.

In the '*Housing and Community Development Act*', 1992. This legal framework is mainly the result of work by Senator Bernie Sanders.

7.

Davis, J. E. (2014) *Manuel d'antispéculation immobilière. Une introduction aux fiducies foncières communautaires*, Montreal: Ecosociété.



Decent Housing
for
EVERYONE

not just the rich

The second threat was the regionalization of their areas of influence. Some new CLTs enlarged their areas of action to the whole of the metropolitan region, sometimes even at committee or even federal level. Their relationship with their 'community' was weaker. Empowerment of members of the 'community' did not always take place; sometimes it was even the place of the 'community' which was questioned.

These tendencies potentially reduced the empowerment of the CLT model to an increasingly neo-liberal, individualized viewpoint, detached from local community developments. As John Davis, one of the principal historic developers of the model in the United States, said, they are 'centripetal forces which tend to distance the model from its roots'.⁸

The CLT, a constantly evolving model

This tendency towards the neo-liberalization of the movement was perhaps not inevitable. Indeed, in the context of its recent international outreach, centrifugal forces can be seen in parallel, marked by renewed interest in the CLT in the informal urban neighbourhoods of several cities. The best known recent example – because it was named in 2015 as the best habitat project on a global scale by the United Nations – is the Caño Martin Peña Community Land Trust (San Juan, Puerto Rico), which supports, as a tool of land tenure, the defence of a community of 25,000 people threatened with eviction from their central position in the city. According to John Davis, *'[I]t reminds the CLT where they come from, what they must do and who they must serve as a development tool to make communities autonomous by counting on their feeling of belonging'*.⁹

The oscillation of the CLT model between radical empowerment and neo-liberal dissolution was neither unequivocal nor rigid, particularly as the model was developing progressively on a global scale. Apart from

8.
Davis, J. E. (2014) *Manuel d'antispéculation immobilière. Une introduction aux fiducies foncières communautaires*, Montreal: Ecosociété.

9.
Ibid.

Great Britain and Kenya, where the CLT already existed before 2008, the model was also developing in Canada, Australia and France and was being studied in several emerging countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The urban situations where poor communities were subject to spatial exclusion (land pressure, forced displacement, etc.) were numerous and made worse everywhere by the 2008 financial crisis.¹⁰ The CLT, in all its forms, had probably a bright future in front of it.

Let us now examine the setting in which the first European CLT appeared, the Community Land Trust Brussels (CLTB) and what type of empowerment it underlies.

The CLT arrives in Europe and joins the Commons movement

The CLT arrived in Europe, specifically in British cities and Brussels after the 2008 financial crisis against a background of impoverishment, a crisis of confidence in public management (outdated participation), a rise in populism (social diversity crisis) and a loss of impetus in the social housing model.

While in the United States CLTs mobilize the community to call for federal involvement – which is otherwise relatively absent – in urban policies, they appeared in Europe in a context where civil society tries to show that a citizenship-based legitimacy partnered with representative power can be envisaged, including in social housing production. In this sense, the CLT model is part of what many people call the third way, where civil society, intervenes in the field of urban policies alongside public and market institutions. Although it was not born of this movement, it goes perfectly with the rise of the *Commons* movement of which it gradually became a reference in land management models,¹¹ among other *shared equity ownership* models. Sometimes identified as a model of shared social

10.

A crisis set off by the bursting of the *subprime* bubble, toxic mortgages which caused hundreds of thousands of Americans to lose their homes.

11.

It is taken in this sense in the dictionary of communal goods, Rochfeld, J., Cornu, M. and Orsi, F. (2017) *Dictionnaire des biens communs*, Quadrige dicos poche, Paris: PUF, 263-266.

responsibility,¹² the CLT effectively offers a paradigm shift: its territorial development project is based on shared responsibility and reciprocal trust at several levels: between individuals, between individuals and collectives, and between collectives, society and public power.

Focus on the Brussels CLT

CLTB, from the art of lobbying to community development

The transfer of the American model to the Brussels context was clearly the result of long-term mobilization (2008-12) by the associative sector that was working for integration through housing, although the CLT model in Brussels cannot be seen from the viewpoint of radical empowerment. Demands from associations in favour of its implementation were organized around several public meetings that aimed to combine the voices of numerous households from poor neighbourhoods. This mobilization periodically demonstrated the efficiency of a *bottom-up* approach to empowerment, or in the words of Jacques Donzelot, the '*art du lobbying*'.¹³

It was due in particular to this initial mobilization that the Brussels Capital Region supported the creation of CLTB in December 2012 and its financing since that date. However, once institutional status was acquired, the CLTB model was rolled out progressively as a community development tool, reflecting a social democrat conception of empowerment whereby residents and associations are granted the right to be involved in formulating a social policy for housing and local development.

12.

Offe, C. (2013) '*Responsabilité sociale partagée – un sens politique et des applications qui restent à définir*', Conseil de l'Europe, 24, Strasbourg: Éditions tendance de la cohésion sociale, 29-50.

13.

Donzelot, J. (2003) *Faire société : La Politique de la ville aux États-Unis et en France*, Paris: Seuil.

One year later, the model was recognized and defined in the regional housing code,¹⁴ based on a 'municipalisation' of its formation and area of action, the metropolitan territory of the Brussels Capital Region, as well as on the financing of its operation and investments for land purchases almost exclusively by the regional public authorities.

This municipal (regional) and metropolitan formalization, supported by the associative sector, is in line with the current formation methods in most of the CLTs on the other side of the Atlantic and shares with them the risk of losing community anchorage and of confining empowerment to an individualized neo-liberal perspective.

CLTB, a civic community

The CLTB seems to be aware of these risks and tries to avoid them via voluntary community work, acknowledged by John Davis, who congratulated the team during a visit to Brussels in 2014, for having focused on the 'C' in CLT. The community did not exist before CLTB. It is the result of its community development work. It can be claimed that the CLTB is in line with the 'civic communities movement' as studied in the American context by Jacques Donzelot.¹⁵ These are formed progressively through the involvement of households and associations in the collective housing projects which unite them.

In its civic community role, the CLTB intends to reveal the intangible links and ethics between its members. The base of ethical values advocated by the CLTB has already been described in this publication's article

14.

'Regional land alliance (Community Land Trust): a not for profit organisation ... whose mission is to acquire and manage land in the Brussels Capital Region with a view to creating on this land accessible housing for vulnerable households as well as for facilities of collective interest, amongst others. The regional land alliance remains the owner of the land but transfers the ownership of the buildings to the households via real divided rights. It determines the rules for the resale of buildings that must allow them to always remain accessible to families with small incomes ...' (Bruxelles-Capitale, M. D. L. R. D. (2013) 'Code Bruxellois du logement', 18.VII.2013, 26.VII.2013.). The ruling gives the government the possibility to authorize such an Alliance. It has still not done this however; now the CLTB is in a pilot phase.

15.

Donzelot, J. (2003) *Faire société : La Politique de la ville aux Etats-Unis et en France*, Paris: Seuil.

by Nicolas Bernard.¹⁶ This sharing of strong moral links contributes to forming a citizenship on which can be built a real multicultural democracy which avoids tensions between communities as well as introversion.¹⁷ The aim of such civic communities is individual and collective action to increase community well-being.

Community development serving the American dream

The nature of citizen engagement advocated by the CLTB seeks above all collaboration in the creation of housing policy. It assumes that community members will gain expertise to become more autonomous and to break with dependence on public assistance. Several measures implemented by the CLTB enable members to enhance their personal power and autonomous activity.

First, CLTB's tripartite governance model, which involves the occupants of CLT land, local associations and public authorities on an equal basis in its decision-making bodies, tries to disassociate the beneficiary households from an assisted social role. Rather, it assumes that they have the means to represent themselves. The same is true of civil society associations which break away from the subordination of their actions by public force. The CLT aims to ensure the conditions for co-responsibility and co-production.

Second, buyer households participate in the creation of the public tender for architecture and works. After a series of workshops, their specific requests are compiled in a list of recommendations annexed to the 'special specifications' of the public tender. In this way, they contribute towards defining their future housing as well as the shared spaces that will encourage community living. The appropriation of their housing is therefore increased.

16.

Through the collective possession of land in the name of the commons, and an anti-speculative resale formula, it avoids social injustice linked to capitalist deregulation of the property market and provides a mechanism for transgenerational solidarity capable of balancing individual and collective interests.

17.

Dawance, T. and Louey, C. (2014) 'Le Community Land Trust de Bruxelles. Quand l'Europe s'inspire des Etats-Unis pour construire un gouvernement et une politique de l'habitat coopérative, solidaire et anti-spéculative' in *Les coopératives d'habitants, des outils pour l'abondance, Repenser le logement abordable dans la cité du XXI^e siècle*, Lyon: Chaircoop.

The families of the 'Le N/d' project
on the renovation site of their future apartments
(source: author)



Third, similarly, community social workers assist households regarding the steps leading to ownership and upkeep of the property and in learning how to take an active role in their habitat (construction site supervision, energy consumption monitoring, training in management of co-ownership, etc.).

Fourth, this work also aims to empower groups of inhabitants. It does this through training aimed at the acquisition of skills (regarding group management techniques, management of building infrastructure techniques) and ensuring in the long term the ability to manage co-ownerships autonomously. In effect, the CLTB's will for co-production relates to all aspects of home ownership, namely rights, risks, responsibilities and benefits.

From housing security to skills network

Thus the CLTB primarily provides households with security through home ownership and asset creation, enabling them to develop their 'inner power', build their self-esteem, and enhance their ability to imagine themselves as being able to influence their own lives, which is often inhibited by the effect of internalized oppression.

In parallel and on this basis, the CLTB is also involved in several community building actions aimed at strengthening the empowerment of its members. On one hand, the CLTB aims to encourage members to get to know each other. Each assembly, training session, meeting or event is seen as an opportunity to build relationships between participants and to create the group by forging a collective identity that goes beyond the co-ownership framework. On the other hand, it seeks to support its members' power to act, based on their abilities and aspirations, in areas which go beyond the strict framework of the habitat, by using their abilities as a means to build collective power. It does this notably in the context of a regional action research project currently under way (2017-19) called 'Citizendev', which is based on the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) method.

Finally, in all of its operations, the CLTB, in partnership with local associations, tries to incorporate functions other than housing in order to meet the need for services

in the working class districts where it is located and give groups of inhabitants access to the districts and to assistance with neighbourhood social developments and local projects. The growth of these services is also an essential vector for driving civil society to take the first steps of what can be called urban planning of the commons.

Conclusion

The CLT model aims to empower its members through home ownership programmes and developing neighbourhood services. Depending on the period and the context, it is rooted either in radical self-defence of the oppressed or in benevolent support of the emancipation of the most needy, or finds itself dealing with a more neo-liberal rationale of empowering the poor to take responsibility for themselves. In practice, the boundary between these different trends is not always watertight. The neo-liberal trend that justifies the disengagement of the state often goes hand in hand with the desire of the model's proponents to support community forms of empowerment.

In this context, we have shown how the Brussels model is clearly based on a benevolent socio-liberal notion whose effects on empowerment appear to link this model to sustainable construction. Nevertheless, this model is still young and faces numerous challenges.¹⁸ CLTB operates in a context where the local social housing policy is still unfamiliar with this new style of government and often still associated with '*a top-down policy decided by an objective technocracy*',¹⁹ as well as a conception of participation and social cohesion which aims more at keeping social peace rather than building power. This is a fundamental distinction between the Anglo-Saxon social and political tradition

18.

Its investment budget represents less than 1% of the regional budget dedicated to the social housing production policy and the CLTB is not yet authorized as a CLT in the Housing Code. Only nine households are housed on ground belonging to the CLTB and 113 are on the way to being housed (2016). The gradual enlargement of different groups of inhabitants will probably consolidate the community dynamic.

19.

Balazard, H. (2015) *Agir en démocratie*, Ivry-sur-Seine: Éditions de l'Atelier, p. 140.

from which the CLT model comes, which places value on trust between people as a source of their power, and the tradition of a strong social state based on policies chosen by the governed.

Strengthening the base of the Brussels model in a more enabling and stabilizing legal framework, as well as diversifying its sources of finance, remains a major challenge. The evolution of CLTB and CLTs in Europe in general may well depend on the more general capacity of the common movement to forge new paradigms of public action in a sustainable way.

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The community land trust

as a new sustainable housing paradigm

Nicolas Bernard

Sustainable housing calls for a certain degree of environmental responsibility, prevents speculation, addresses the needs of weaker members of society, and gives rise to participatory management. Of the last, the community land trust (CLT) is the emblematic incarnation. Indeed, the CLT uses land – the epitome of a rare resource – sparingly through the legal mechanism of dismemberment of ownership that tends to make the land a sort of inalienable ‘commons’; captures the bulk of the added value that accrues in the event of resale (and reinjects the product of this added value into the subsequent purchase price so as to guarantee affordable access to its beneficiaries over the long term); and is managed in close conjunction with residents, the surrounding community, and public authorities. The concept, which was forged in the United States, is now spreading rapidly in the Brussels Capital Region, even though political threats recently imperilled its existence.

Current overview

Today, in 2018, the CLT is not an unknown arrangement, or one seen solely through the prism of the English-speaking world. The idea has taken root and flourished in Belgium for years. The concept has made its official entry into the Brussels Housing Code¹ and the first CLT housing units were inaugurated in the Brussels Region three years ago. We know that it is, roughly speaking, a mechanism enabling people to acquire property at a low cost and subject to time limits, one that captures the bulk of the added value in the event of resale and is managed in participatory manner. There is literature on the subject² and the topic is covered in conferences and colloquia.

In contrast, the context in which the CLT arose remains far too often in the shadows. The idea cropped up as a reaction to the limitations of current first-time home ownership policy. Indeed, these failings are the scheme's primary justification. What is more, beyond the technical specifications of the mechanism, the transformations that the very idea of housing oneself and creating a city undergo as a result of the CLT are not always clearly seen. In this case, it is a both a powerful and unprecedented vector of sustainable housing. The present contribution

1.

Art. 2, §1^{er}, 27°, introduced by the ordinance of 11 July 2013: 'Alliance foncière régionale (Community land trust): Non-profit organisation approved by and the terms of which are set by the Government for the purpose of acquiring and managing plots of land in the Brussels-Capital Region in order to create on such land both affordable housing for socially insecure households and community facilities, amongst other things. The community land trust remains the owner of the land but transfers ownership of the buildings to the households via dismemberments of rights in rem. It sets the building resale rules that must ensure that the buildings always remain accessible to families with low incomes. In the case of projects receiving regional subsidies, these rules must be approved by the Government'. See a commentary in Bernard, N. and Mahoux, A. (2014) 'Le contenu (et la philosophie) de la réforme du 11 juillet 2013' in Bernard, N. and Mahoux, A., eds., *Le Code bruxellois du logement en débat(s)*, Brussels: Larcier.

2.

Timmermans, R. (2016) *De Community Land Trust op coöperatieve landmaatschappij voor uitgifte en beheer van communale grond*, Mechelen: Wolters Kluwer, Dawance, T. and Louey, C. (2014) 'Le Community Land Trust de Bruxelles. Quand l'Europe s'inspire des Etats-Unis pour construire un gouvernement et une politique de l'habitat coopérative, solidaire et anti-spéculative' in *Les coopératives d'habitants, des outils pour l'abondance, Repenser le logement abordable dans la cité du XXI^e siècle*, Lyon: Chaircoop., Bernard, N., Géronnez, L. and De Pauw, G. (2011) 'Les Community land trusts : une réponse (acquisitive) innovante face à la crise du logement', *Les Cahiers de l'urbanisme*, (78), 91-100, Bernard, N., De Pauw, G. and Geronnez, L. (2010) 'Coopératives de logement et community land trusts', *Courriers hebdomadaires du CRISP*, 28 (2013), 5-52.

shall thus stress these two points, albeit not without wrapping up with a more forward-looking note about the future of the CLT in Brussels.

Limitations of current Brussels first-time home ownership policy

The CLT contains a huge paradox: although it is endowed with its own (and innovative) personality, its added value is revealed only by glimpses of the flaws that are ascribed to another policy, the one that encourages people to buy their homes. Of course, everyone is in agreement overall about recognizing the virtues of home ownership when it comes to forced savings, the freedom to run one's property on one's own,³ and self-esteem, for example. Yet this policy is currently plagued by a spate of serious problems. In addition, if these problems are not solved, they run the risk of shaking the foundations of credit that is attached to the very institution of ownership. Let us list these issues below.

First, skyrocketing prices eliminate households with modest incomes from this segment de facto.⁴

The rate of home ownership in Belgium is stagnating (if not declining⁵), which is a clear sign that real property ownership is having a tough time 'breaking into' the less affluent socio-economic strata. Next, the complete absence of taxation on any capital gains made on real property sales⁶ reinforces speculation and pushes

3.

Besse, J.-M. (2013) *Habiter: Un monde à mon image*, Paris: Flammarion.

4.

Anfré, M.-N. and Gobert, O. (2016) *Les chiffres-clés du logement en Wallonie*, Charleroi, Staelens, P., Kahane, L. and Franck, P.-A. (2015) *Observatoire des ventes de biens résidentiels en Région de Bruxelles-Capitale 1990-2010*, Bruxelles.

5.

In the Brussels Region, for example, the proportion of homeowners fell to (exactly) 38.81% in 2011 from 42.7% a decade earlier (comparison of the '2011 Census' with the census taken in 2011 (a socio-economic survey of 96.9% of the country's households that was conducted by the National Statistics Institute in 2001 at the behest of the Economic Affairs Minister of the time).

6.

Indeed, the tax (16.5% of the added value) applies only if the seller does not reside in the building and, cumulatively, the resale takes place less than five years after the purchase. See Articles 90, Par. 1(10), and 171, Par. 4(e), in fine, of the Belgian income tax code.

prices even higher.⁷ With their massive incentives to get private individuals to acquire real property (bonuses, soft mortgages, tax deductions, tax rebates, etc.),⁸ public authorities recover not a penny of the financial aid paid out if the property is subsequently resold,⁹ which thus forces them to repeat the same disbursements for the next buyers, *ad infinitum*, whereas the worth of real property rises in the interval. In any event, the fixation on home ownership leads certain households to sink into debt to achieve this goal. This exposes them to the risk of defaulting on their loans at the slightest material problem and, *ultimately*, of the seizure of and eviction from their property. To make matters worse, the only real attraction of property ownership is that it enables owners

7.

Without taking account of the fact that a third of the registration fee is returned if the property is resold within two years (Art. 212, Par. 1, Brussels-Capital Region's Registration, Mortgage, and Clerk's Office Fees Code).

8.

Whether:

- the former federal housing bonus (deduction of mortgage interest payments); Walloon 'housing voucher' (tax rebate that replaced the housing bonus in the southern half of the country: Walloon decree of 20 July 2016 on the granting of a tax rebate for the acquisition of one's own home: the 'Chèque Habitat', Moniteur Belge, 10 August 2016); mortgages at preferential rates (this is the main activity of the Flemish, Brussels, and Walloon Housing Funds and the Société Wallonne du crédit social (Walloon social lending society);
- the Walloon mortgage guarantee (whereby the Walloon Region grants a 'guarantee of successful conclusion of payment of the principal and interests and accessory fees' on loans granted by a series of social agencies: Walloon Government order of 30 April 2009 setting the conditions under which the Region's guarantee of successful conclusion is granted for the repayment of the loans stipulated in Article 23 of the Walloon Housing Code, M.B., 16 June 2009);
- the Brussels Region's registration fee reduction (whereby all registration fees are waived on the first 175,000 EUR of a real estate purchase: Art. 46bis of Brussels-Capital Region's Registration, Mortgage, and Clerk's Office Fees Code);
- the portability of the registration fee in Flanders (after a first purchase, only the part of the registration fee for a subsequent purchase that exceeds the fee paid on the initial purchase must be paid: Art. 61.3 of the Flemish Region's Registration, Mortgage, and Clerk's Office Fees Code);
- buyers' bonuses (notably the Walloon Government's Order of 21 January 1999 instituting a housing purchase bonus, M.B., 25 February 1999);
- the construction and sale in Brussels of new housing units at reduced prices for households with so-called 'modest incomes' (such as done by citydev.brussels, an office that, manages to reduce the sales prices of its housing to two-thirds of their market value thanks to generous regional support, without accounting for the fact that the buyer of one of these properties is eligible for a reduced VAT rate of 6%: Art. XXXVI of Annex A to the Royal Order of 20 July 1970 setting value-added tax rates and the distribution of goods and services according to these rates, M.B., 31 July 1970);
- free loss-of-income insurance in Wallonia (Walloon Government Order of 21 January 1999 instituting insurance against the risk of a loss of income due to job loss or occupational disability, M.B., 25 February 1999);
- etc.

9.

After a certain time of personal occupancy.

to distance themselves from their peers and increase their living space, which leads households to prefer detached or semi-detached houses,¹⁰ despite their higher energy needs, and land reserves.¹¹ The result is that the 'internal migratory balance' in Brussels has been despairingly negative for years, that is, significantly more households have been leaving the Brussels Region for Wallonia or Flanders than those moving in the opposite direction.¹² Last but not least, promoting a society of individual homeowners runs counter to the idea of parsimonious collective management of land (and housing, and the notion of neighbourhood and the higher ideal of community living).

To sum up: the traditional policy of support for home ownership gives social welfare short shrift, is not very ecological, entails substantial costs for the public coffers (costs that are constantly rising),¹³ and gobbles up space, making it more difficult for those who come after us to acquire property in turn. It thus seems to be the exact antithesis of sustainable housing.

Three founding principles of the CLT that tie in with sustainable housing

Dismemberment of ownership to immunize the land

The CLT arose in this specific context as a reaction to these failings. What is special (and novel)

10.

Lambert, A. (2015) *"Tous propriétaires!". L'envers du décor pavillonnaire*, Paris: Seuil.

11.

Verdonck, M., Taymans, M. and Van Droogenbroeck, N. (2012) *Évolution, caractéristiques et attentes de la classe moyenne bruxelloise*, Bruxelles: Institut Bruxellois de Statistique et d'analyse.

12.

For example, 39,000 versus 24,000 in 2016, for a loss of about 15,000 inhabitants, and this haemorrhage is repeated each year. However, this movement is masked statistically by continued strong birth and international immigration rates in Brussels (a positive 'natural' net increase of 9,000 due to births and 10,000 due to international immigration) that, together, more than offset the aforementioned urban exodus. See Hermia, J.-P. (2018) *Baromètre démographique 2017 de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale*, 22, Brussels.

13.

So, the shortfall in income due to federal tax measures, including the housing bonus, is an estimated €2.2 billion (Bonnier, B. and Zimmer, P. (2008) 'Fiscalité immobilière: le coût de la brique dans le ventre', *Les échos du logement*, (2), 17-22. And this cost is singular in that it is barely visible – and thus hardly discussed – since it is a matter of a tax revenue shortfall (the classic hypothesis of any mortgage interest tax deductibility policy) rather than a disbursement.



↑
Assemblée générale
(source: Gerardo Cornejo 2017)

↓
Building and land ownership are separated
(source: Monica Gallab 2015)



in the CLT is that it rests upon the legal principle¹⁴ of the dismemberment of ownership or 'dual ownership': the CLT remains the owner of the land whilst granting a 'surface right'¹⁵ to the recipient to build and/or occupy the existing property, with owner status, for a period of 50 years at most, in a modern adaptation of the Roman civil law notion of the *superficiarius*. Make no mistake: as a dismembered right in rem (or right to someone else's property), this surface right confers an authentic right of ownership on the recipient, even though it is limited in time and concerns the buildings only. As for the rest, unlike a tenant, for example, the holder of this right enjoys all the government aid that is given to support first-time home ownership.

This dismemberment of ownership has at least two advantages. First, the subsoil (the bedrock and mineral rights) is not available for market transactions; since, given that it belongs 'forever' to the CLT,¹⁶ it is part of a trust, which gives it the status of community property of a sort that is managed collectively because the CLT itself is managed collectively.¹⁷ Moreover, the CLT must belong rather to the associations category.¹⁸ Second, the taxes that apply to the dismemberment operations are much lower than those that apply to 'fee simple' or full ownership operations. When that is combined with

14.

Derived from a Dutch law of 1824 (which is still in force).

15.

Law of 10 January 1824 on surface rights.

16.

In Brussels, it belongs more specifically to the public utility foundation (*fondation d'utilité publique*, the equivalent of a trust), which owns the land for the CLT.

17.

See below.

18.

That is why the community land trust must have the form of a 'non-profit organization', as stipulated in the Brussels Housing Code (Art. 2, §1^{er}, 27°), the idea being to preserve the informality, dynamism, independence, and maximal freedom from political influences of the mechanism that originally stemmed from the vitality of American associations. Some, completely to the contrary, demanded that the CLT should be placed in the ranks of public real estate operators (or at least be subject to government oversight), if only because this meant they would be eligible for state subsidies, but the lawmakers of 2013 refused to back down. Moreover, the expression 'non-profit organization' was deliberately very broad so as not to target non-profit associations (the Belgian a.s.b.l.) only. True to the tradition of compromise, this organization must be 'approved by the Government, which sets its conditions', and in a similar register, the resale rules adopted by CLTs that 'receive regional subsidies' must be 'approved by the Government' as well.

the initial subsidy that the CLT¹⁹ enjoys, the total purchase price is reduced accordingly (by about a third compared with market prices) and, as a corollary, puts this new type of property within reach of less affluent people (and/or the elderly²⁰). In any event, this concern for affordability is not a vain word, since the purchase price depends directly on the buyer's resources.²¹ It is no coincidence, in this regard, that the 'Brussels Housing Fund' has entered into a structural relationship with the CLT. Moreover, these guardrails to benefit the weakest are all the more called for in that the CLTB (Community Land Trust Brussels), which is guided by a social concern, reserves its housing for applicants whose incomes do not exceed the eligibility caps for social housing.²² This is fully in line, moreover, with the stipulations of the Brussels Housing Code, which limits the scheme to households 'in a state of social insecurity'.²³ Yet, for all that, the CLTB cannot be equated with social housing,²⁴ which comes under the category for rentals only.

Like all innovative schemes, the CLT raises questions, even fears. The first concerns duration. Long time periods and security of occupancy are known to be markers of lasting and sustainable housing. What happens, in other words, when the 50 years are over? Let us admit, first of all, that such a length of time is already considerably longer than the average duration of residential leases (two and a half years). Next, and contrary to what the law stipulates for the 99-year lease – the CLT's closest cousin – the 50-year limit on the surface rights is *renewable* (provided that

19.

To buy the land, for example.

20.

For, as a rule, the (less remote) prospect of the death of a mortgage applicant of a certain age all too often deters banks from stepping in. In such a context, a smaller loan may dispel these fears.

21.

It decreases in line with income, as is the case, *mutatis mutandis*, in social housing.

22.

Condition to evaluate on the day that the housing is granted, not at the time of inclusion in the waiting list.

23.

Art. 2, §1^{er}, 27°, Brussels Housing Code.

24.

For example, property is not awarded to candidates on the basis of a complicated equation of priority points but more simply, according to their seniority in the waiting list (provided, of course, that the candidate belongs to the income category that the CLTB has attached to the housing unit up for sale).

the parties agree, of course). And if the surface rights owner wishes to leave earlier? The novation clause (being tested at Louvain-la-Neuve²⁵) allows the surface rights owner to sell this right early, at which point a new 50-year period will kick off for the new buyer, and so on and so forth for subsequent buyers. In other words, the clock is reset at each transmission of the title (*inter vivos*, that is).

That being so, is there nothing to bequeath to one's children (a common – and legitimate – question)? Yes, there is! First, the surface rights owner's death opens up the possibility for the claimants to occupy the property,²⁶ just as they are free to sell their surface rights before the 50-year term elapses and recoup the investment. Unlike rents, which are 'lost forever', the money paid by the surface rights owner (to repay the mortgage) is recovered, in a way, when the title-holder leaves the CLT. This is all the more the case in that, still in contradistinction to a tenancy, the surface rights owner is allowed to carry out work and make improvements to the property, just as any homeowner may do, and the resale price will reflect the costs incurred. Before wrapping up this point, we must pursue one last train of thought. This placement of the land in trust effectively puts the CLT in the 'common property' category.²⁷ Both the surface and subsoil belong to an organization in charge of running the whole for the benefit of the common good. In so doing, the CLT belongs to one of two fields likely to see common property prosper, namely, the 'rarefaction of a natural resource'²⁸

25.

A city built entirely on a similar principle of the dismemberment of ownership (in this case, the 99-year lease conferring a right in rem).

26.

Up to a 30-year limit as of the date of acquisition of the right by the claimant(s). At that time, the heir whose income does not exceed the social housing eligibility cut-off will be permitted to live there another 20 years, with the possibility of renewing the surface rights.

27.

Cf. Dardot, P. and Laval, C. (2015) *Commun: Essai sur la révolution au XXI^e siècle*, Paris: La Découverte ; Boccon, T. and Cretois, P. (2015) *État social, propriété publique et biens communs*, Lormont: Le Bord de l'eau ; A. Chaigneau, « Propriété collective » in Orsi, F., Rochfeld, J. and Cornu-Volatron, M. (2017) *Dictionnaire des biens communs*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

28.

Next to its contrary, i.e., the boundlessness of information and cultural resources. See Ost, F., Misonne, D. and de Clippele, M.-S. (2017) 'Propriété et biens communs' in Wigener, B., Mahlmann, M., Clement, S. and Kuhler, A., eds., *La propriété et ses limites. Das Eigentum und seine Grenzen*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, p.141.

(land, in this case). Land is indeed a finite, neither expandable nor renewable, resource that whets everyone's appetite.²⁹ Today there is reason to remove this rare resource from the realm of unending private ownership to preserve access to the land for the generations to come. *'In a lot of cases, the split-up ownership gives way to a resource, often real estate, or at least to one of its utilities to benefit others, or shared by several people ... As such, it includes a defining element of Commons'*.³⁰

Capped resale price or long-term affordability guarantee

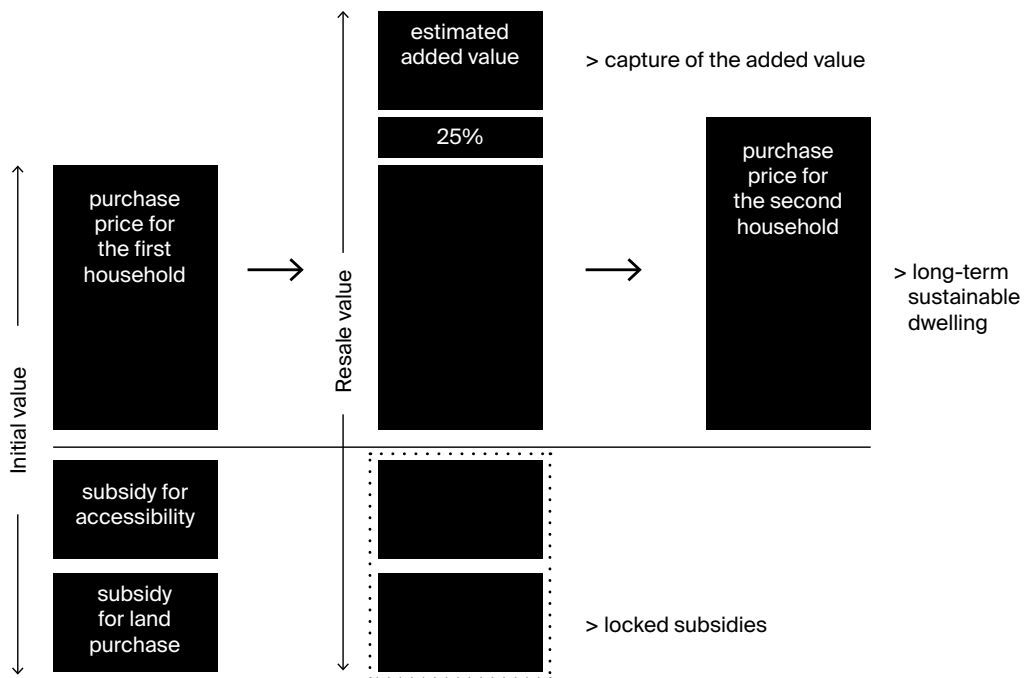
Let us dwell a minute upon the resale price, for that is where a characteristic feature of the CLT (alongside the separation of ownership) comes into play. In a nutshell, this price is capped. Rather than leaving the selling surface rights owner free to set the price (in which case the seller alone would pocket all of the capital gains generated by rising property values), the price corresponds to the initial amount upped by the investments made by the surface rights owner and only a quarter of the aforementioned capital gains. By activating the preemptive clause designed in its favour, the CLT buys the right to make it available to the next buyer at a price that remains affordable. In this way, 'permanently affordable housing' is guaranteed and the wind is taken out of the sails of the purely speculative rationales that tend to exclude the weakest from the property market. What is more, the public authorities no longer have to provide pecuniary assistance *ad libitum* with each new transaction. So, once past the initial subsidy (to purchase the land, for example), the system is self-sufficient. Boosting poorer households' solvency artificially by means of bonuses and other monetary assistance is not the solution, since, through the laws of supply and demand, such actions will themselves

29.

This is exacerbated in a region such as Brussels, which is both subject to very strong demographic pressure and locked within administrative boundaries that cannot be shifted.

30.

'Dans de nombreuses hypothèses, la propriété dite démembrée emporte un accès à une ressource, souvent immobilière ou à tout le moins à l'une de ses utilités au profit d'autrui, voire partagé à plusieurs ... En cela elle comporte un élément de définition des communs', editors' translation in L. Pfister, 'Propriété démembrée ou démembrements de propriété', in Orsi, F., Rochfeld, J. and Cornu-Volatron, M. (2017) *Dictionnaire des biens communs*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.



fuel a rise in property values. Instead, those breaking into the property market are helped most effectively by being given access to a supply of properties at affordable, regulated prices.

Capped resale price or long-term affordability guarantee
Tripartite management or guarantee of harmonious, concerted, and collective CLT development.

The last founding trait of the CLT is its tripartite management, mixing CLT residents, neighbours from the surrounding area, and public authorities in equal parts.³¹ Whilst the CLT is not collective housing *sensu stricto*, it is developed collectively. Indeed, the principle of participatory management has seldom (if ever) been developed as much in the field of housing as it has in the case of CLTs. Not only are the residents or occupants urged to take part in running their entire real estate complex³² (right from the design phase, in fact), but participation goes as far as including the CLT's neighbours in this process. Even if they are not housed on CLT land, such neighbours are directly concerned by the erection of a new building 'at their gates' and thus have something to say in the matter. Even more amazingly, their opinions are taken into account when it comes to building size (they ask for it to be reasonable) or use (multipurpose is preferred). The advantages of such involvement are obvious: rather than being imposed on and meeting with outright rejection from the neighbourhood (the all too well known 'NIMBY effect'), a CLT construction project will be carried out in a well-thought-out manner, in line with existing needs, and be compatible with the immediate environment, for ultimately better integration in the neighbourhood.³³ At the

31.

Each of these three groups has one-third of the votes on the board of directors of the non-profit CLTB.

32.

To this end, they are invited to attend a series of meetings, some of which are presented as being mandatory.

33.

As proof of this openness to the neighbourhood, some of the CLTB's current projects provide collective facilities, such as a laundry room or community hall, that are accessible to area residents.

end of the day, the CLTB's projects are truly characterized by their mix of both housing types³⁴ and community functions.³⁵ Through this achievement, the CLTB makes good on the promise enshrined in the Brussels Housing Code, in which the 'regional land trust' must 'create on these plots of land both housing ... and facilities of community interest'.³⁶ In this way, much more than a building is erected: a swatch of urban fabric is unfurled.

Here, too, the kinship with common property is obvious. The ownership right *in se*, as a given legal prerogative, is not the only thing to have to undergo a change in exclusivity to join the realm of the commons; the mode of governance of the whole must also adjust to comply with this collegial requirement. Dividing a right would be of little use if each of its holders could continue to exercise it according to their discretion, in denial of their consorts' needs. The decision-making must be collective in turn. Seen from this standpoint, *'the institutional activity of Commons can only be communal ... Commons are at the same time the empowerment to act and everything that these acts enable'*.³⁷

The land, an eternal object of greed

It is impossible to end this contribution without mentioning a peril that recently hovered over the CLTB to the point of threatening its very existence. This peril concerned the land, the immunization of which is the very hallmark of the CLT. By a decision taken at the beginning of 2017, the government of the Brussels Capital Region very seriously considered transferring 'ownership of the lands

34.

In so doing, the CLTB takes the trouble to ensure a mixture of social profiles (or, rather, income brackets, of which there are four in all) in its buildings, in part in order to guarantee the financial feasibility of the project.

35.

Several of the CLTB's current projects thus include a mix of housing and convenience shops, senior citizen day-care centres, etc.

36.

Art. 2, §1^{er}, 27°, Brussels Housing code.

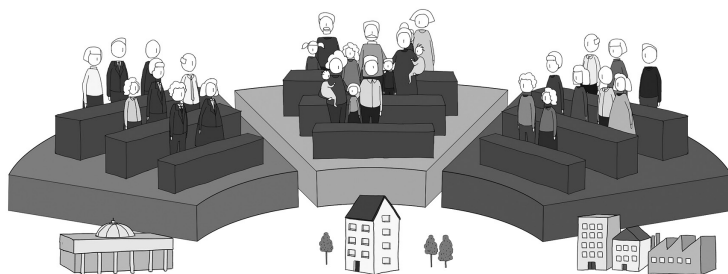
37.

'[L]'activité d'institution du commun ne peut être que commune ... Le commun est tout à la fois une qualité de l'agir et ce que ce même agir institue', editors' translation, Dardot, P. and Laval, C. (2015) *Commun: Essai sur la révolution au XXI^e siècle*, Paris: La Découverte.



↑
Liedts project renovation
(source : Sophie Ghyselen 2016)

↓
Tripartite management
(source: Monica Gallab 2015)



$\frac{1}{3}$ PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

$\frac{1}{3}$ RESIDENTS

$\frac{1}{3}$ CIVIL SOCIETY

held by the CLT Foundation to the Housing Fund', which would in turn 'take over, come what may, the role of the Foundation for the new operations that are carried out after completion of the CLT reform'. The two-armed CLTB, which consists of a foundation that owns the land and a non-profit association in charge of managing the housing units, to paint a simple picture of the situation, would have been stripped of its land. Like an amputee, it would have carried on only in the form (and with the reduced powers) of a non-profit association, thereby losing all semblance of ownership of the project, for example.

It goes without saying that this reform plan triggered great alarm. Let me remind you that in law the deprivation of ownership decided by the state must comply with strict rules. By virtue of the Constitution itself,³⁸ such 'expropriation' calls for the payment of 'fair and prior compensation' to the party that has been stripped of its property. In any event, the state must imperatively plead a reason of 'public utility', on pain of losing all justification. More fundamentally, transmitting the CLTB's land to a public real estate operator³⁹ in such an out-of-hand manner would without fail dissolve the participatory rationale that is interwoven with and guides decision-making within the principle of the Foundation (and which, in contrast, is entirely missing in the Housing Fund). If that occurred, the CLTB's strong role in the sustainable housing dynamic would be seriously weakened.

Luckily, the Brussels government seems to have back-pedalled in the intervening months. It remains for us to hope that this wise turn-around is not a simple stay of execution. Continued vigilance is thus required, especially at a time when a new regional executive government committee is getting ready to take up its duties (with potentially different views on the CLTB, for example). As for the subject of our discussion, a (very important) lesson should be learnt from this: entrusting land ownership lastingly to a private association tasked with

38.

Art. 16.

39.

Without even making any appraisal of the operation or even the legitimacy of this operator (the Housing Fund, in this case).

keeping the land in its possession in order to be able to dedicate it to collective use is not a given for certain public authorities, even though it is the most tangible expression of common property in the area of housing. Mentalities are clearly the hardest things to change.

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Evolution of the housing cooperative model in Brussels

Anna Ternon



This paper focuses on the evolution of the housing cooperative model in Brussels to date through the stories of inhabitants of the garden city of 'Le Logis'.

Three dimensions are discussed in this chapter: organisational, spatial and social. The organisational dimension is defined by the modes of production, the legal framework in which they operate and the modes of governance. The spatial dimension corresponds to the criteria of establishment in the territory, the produced urban forms, the collective spaces and urban diversity. The social dimension is the analysis of the relations of inhabitants with each other, the neighbourhood, the city and the territory at large.

Finally, this history will be compared with the current situation in Brussels and existing alternatives for managing urban space and housing.

Context: a short history of Brussels housing cooperatives

In Belgium, the cooperative movement developed in the aftermath of the First World War. It contributed significantly to the reconstruction effort. Let us remember that at the end of the Great War, the housing shortage was estimated to be between 200,000 and 300,000 units, a figure that testifies not only to the particularly acute nature of the question of housing as it was posed at that time, but also the parallel that can be made with the situation that prevails today, a century later.

In 1918, under the pressure of the nascent socialist movement, the government took the initiative to create the National Housing Company, or SNHBM (law of October 11, 1919). Its goal was to lend low-rate (2.75%) long-term (66 years) funding to local construction companies, thus facilitating the emergence of associations working to fill the housing gap.¹ Many of these local societies were cooperatives, a form of association that appeared in London in 1888. The daily newspaper *Le Soir* of 29 April 1922, stated: 'These societies are founded thanks to the cooperative action of their effective members who, while proposing to occupy the dwellings built by them, participate, moreover, in the formation of their social capital. In other words, the tenants, members of these companies, are at the same time co-owners of the buildings built by them ... Tenant cooperative societies are usually formed among groups of people with certain professional, corporate or other affinities.' The fixing of the minimum social share at a very low rate favoured access of low-income cooperative applicants, while public authorities took part in the capital of the enterprise at the rate of 20% for the state and 20% for the province, as payment for war damage.

In April 1920, the Union of Cities organized a National Affordable Housing Conference, in which most architects and planners of the modernist movement participated. This conference would define the theoretical framework

1.
Eggericx, L. and Hanosset, Y. (2003) *Les cités-jardins : le Logis et Floréal*, Bruxelles: Ministère de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale. Direction des monuments et des sites, p. 5.

for the national housing policy. Faced with problems of hygiene and proximity generated by collective housing, the National Society favoured the model of garden cities recommended by modernists.

Garden cities were for Brussels and the whole country a great adventure. The construction of 21 garden cities or districts was undertaken at the green edge of the dense city. Even more than Howard's theories, ideas propagated by Unwin influenced the post-war movement of garden cities in Belgium. He had a community-centred concept of space that was to express cooperation and participation as much as possible. It was not just about housing the poor; it was necessary, more fundamentally, to insert them into social life by providing neighbourhoods with a system of collective spaces and common facilities included in the construction programme from the very beginning of the project: a network of planted paths and collective spaces in the interior of a block, a civic centre, a multipurpose room, a school, a library, a sports infrastructure, or a centre for physical and moral education.²

This cooperative spirit was killed by politics. Starting in 1923, governments no longer approved new societies which, according to authorities of that time, socialist and liberal alike, promoted the emergence of revolutionary ideas. In 1925, the fear of a red belt around Brussels and the cessation of payment of war damages stopped the creation of new garden cities. Subsequently, the garden cities were blamed for urban sprawl and lack of investment in the city centre. Speaking of 'Le Logis' and 'Floréal', Van der Swaelmen said, 'Here, or anywhere, in Belgium, we do not create a garden city proper, but we make the extension of methodical city, organic urbanization, in the form of neighbourhood gardens'. The ideas of the modernists would evolve gradually, as they abandoned the garden city and the collective construction of an ecological balance between city and country and instead promoted construction in height and the 'existenzminimum' theory. Housing, which had become collective, should

2.
Eggericx, L. and Hanosset, Y. (2003) *Les cités-jardins : le Logis et Floréal*, Bruxelles: Ministère de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale. Direction des monuments et des sites, p. 17.



↑
Simone's first dwelling at Le Logis
(source: author)

↓
Simone's second dwelling at Le Logis
(source: author)



only be used for basic functions because the new ways of life and the techniques developed should allow families to leave their homes as much as possible to spend time outdoors and in nature. This type of provision, however, deprived the inhabitants of the direct contact of the street and by the same token of community living.

At the legal level, the overhaul of the social rental system led to no longer allowing heirs to access the estates of coop-owners, which profoundly changed the living project cooperatives made possible. This was compounded by an evolution of company law which saw cooperatives as commercial companies and as having a market function, and which only very indirectly conveyed the idea of cooperation in law. This not only led to the proliferation of cooperative societies whose functioning was in no way related to cooperative entrepreneurship, but also, and more important, resulted in many experiences of grouped or supportive housing based on principles and values of cooperation that did not adopt legal status because it was considered too unfavourable.

Meeting with five inhabitants of 'Le Logis'

'Le Logis' and 'Floréal' in Watermael-Boitsfort were the largest group of affordable housing units built between the two wars. The cooperative 'Le Logis' was founded on 3 October 1921. It was initiated by banking sector employees mostly from the 'Caisse d'Epargne', with 225 cooperators. 'Floréal' was founded by typographers of the newspaper *Le Peuple*. The two cooperatives made the decision to design the two sets as a whole. The landscaping plan was designed by landscape architect Louis Van der Swaelem and the architectural design was made by architect Jean-Jules Eggericx.

This article examines the model of cooperatives and the evolution of 'Le Logis'. The research was conducted in an exploratory framework and is based on a small sample of five inhabitants' testimonies. This paper describes experiences reported in the course of three interviews. Simone was the first to be interviewed, born in Watermael-Boitsfort in 1946. At the time, the cooperative societies themselves took steps to find new cooperators



↑↑
Simone's third dwelling at Le Logis
(source: author)

↑
Simone's last dwelling at Le Logis
(source: author)

and her family was awarded housing at the garden city 'Le Logis' in 1952. Her mother was a housewife and her father worked as a bookkeeper in Anderlecht. Their house was in the triangle of the Avenue des Sylphes.

Arriving at 'Le Logis', Simone's family included two children and added another a year later. At 18, Simone left 'Le Logis' to study in the centre of Brussels. At the end of her studies, after getting married, she registered with her husband and daughter to obtain housing in 'Le Logis' cooperative. Their apartment was in the building on Avenue Van der Swaelmen built in 1969.

In 1971, when their second child was born, they got a house on Rue des Courlis. Today, Simone lives in an apartment in the 'Les Trois Tilleuls' building. When her children left, she found herself alone and returned to an apartment because the workload of maintaining a house was too heavy and she did not see the utility of occupying an empty house. Her youngest daughter had gotten an apartment and had just had a baby. Hence, they could simply exchange homes.

The second interview was with Marc. He became a cooperator in 1976. Since then, he has been a tenant of a house on Avenue des Sylphes where he raised his three children. Marc has been a member of the Logis Board of Directors for 25 years and has chaired it for the past five years.

The third interview was with three Logis residents, the sisters Marie and Suzanne and their friend Michèle. Marie and Suzanne have lived in Le Logis since they were born, in 1947 and 1950 respectively. Marie lived from 1972 to 1980 in an apartment, then moved to her current home. Suzanne lived for 44 years in her parents' house and currently lives in an apartment. Michèle was born on Rue du Pinson in 1952. After a few years in Africa, her family moved to Le Logis on Rue du Friquet. She got married to her neighbour and they moved in together on Rue d'Ortolan. After two years and the birth of their first son, they moved to an apartment above a bookstore. Upon their second son's birth, they got the house in which they still live today, on Avenue des Tritons.

Three-dimensional analysis

Combining the story of the inhabitants with theoretical research serves the three dimensions of my research.

The first dimension is the organisational dimension. Le Logis is similar to tenant cooperatives in Brussels. They were formed in the 1920s by members who wanted to become stakeholders in a housing construction company. This mechanism offered the possibility to outsiders such as private investors or public operators to participate in the development of the project. Legally, cooperatives were thus akin to traditional societies in which shareholders could participate more actively in the management of the company. All cooperators had the right to vote at general meetings and appoint the directors, who were mainly tenants. Since the regionalization and implementation of the housing code, cooperatives, under the supervision of Belgian regional governments, have been subject to the same rules of allocation of social housing. This has undoubtedly influenced the decrease in tenants' commitment to cooperative values. When a set of houses was constructed, the future inhabitants could choose in which house they would live. Homes were reserved for families with children, to create a fulfilling environment for families. To become a cooperator, one had to buy 150 shares of 100 'francs belges' per share regardless of the surface area of the house. With the changeover to the euro, the conversion was 150 shares of €2.48. Rent was calculated according to income: a standard rent was established, which could be reduced or increased depending on the family's financial situation. At the time, the profits of the cooperative made it possible to create places of education, culture and sports activities in the neighbourhood. The first school Simone attended was the cooperative's Les Aigrettes nursery school. Marie, Suzanne and Michèle went to the Institut de l'Assomption St Thérèse.

Before the creation of the Brussels region in 1989, cooperators of the second generation still had the privilege of priority access to housing provided that their incomes were below a certain level. Today, Le Logis is subject to the rules of allocation of social housing and its members



'Venelles', alleys
(source: author)

La Ferme du Chant des Cailles
(source: author)



therefore no longer have the freedom to perform this kind of procedure. In mentioning this, Simone observed, 'I could never have lived in Watermael-Boitsfort if I had not been at Le Logis. I have wonderful childhood memories in this neighbourhood. I raised my children in Le Logis. I thought it was great to have a house, a small garden and all the infrastructure of Watermael-Boitsfort. Subsequently, I did not find it logical to occupy a three-bedroom house while families were waiting'.

The second dimension is the spatial dimension. Like other garden cities in Brussels, Le Logis respected the star-shaped plan advocated by Verwilghen and lay on the outskirts of the city (until it got absorbed by urban development). Garden cities were connected to the city by rail, tram or bus. Van der Swaelmen's development plan exploited the resources of the highly irregular terrain and fragmented it into a series of differentiated units whose landscaping was based on an extremely complex hierarchy of public and private spaces. The private gardens were arranged around a common area where sometimes sandboxes or playgrounds were installed. The garden city's central space, where all collective activities the retail spaces were organized, was Le Fer à Cheval building.

According to Simone, the street of Rue des Trois Tilleuls was also famous for its many shops and Le Studio Logis. This is where the locals went to run their errands and for festivities – it was the meeting point of the neighbourhood. These spaces belonged to the cooperative and were rented to shopkeepers. In her childhood, Simone knew the cooperative shop where inhabitants could use food stamps. There were also street vendors, such as L'Union économique, which passed in a horse-drawn carriage. Simone recalled, 'When the horse was passing, everyone went out to pick up these droppings and put them in their rose gardens'. Today, most businesses have disappeared, but the building themselves still have some functions, including the neighbourhood house of the garden cities and the Social Cohesion Project.

For Marie, Suzanne and Michèle, the Place du Logis was also one of the main meeting places for their part of the garden city. They used to play in the tunnels

that had been dug under the square during the war. The stadium and the music academy are also mentioned in the testimonies as meeting places. Over the years, local commerce has gradually disappeared as well as most activities organized by the cooperative.

Finally, the last dimension is the social dimension. During her childhood Simone's relationship to the city was minor. Later, she worked in different municipalities of Brussels and made daily trips to the city by tram or bike. According to her, owing to urban expansion, such connections have intensified and inhabitants do more of their shopping in the city. This urban sprawl is perceived as partly responsible for the partial loss of the community spirit that prevailed in the city during her childhood. An interesting element is that residents, throughout their lives in the cooperative, could obtain housing adapted to different family situations. This puts into question the current conditions to which cooperatives are subjected for the allocation of housing. Having their own workers is yet another social benefit for cooperatives. Many gardeners, painters, plumbers and other craftsmen work daily for the cooperatives. Today, Simone, Marie and Marc find the cooperative spirit in the project La Ferme du Chant des Cailles, which they joined at its inception. La Ferme du Chant des Cailles is a sustainable food and urban ecological and participatory farming project born in 2012 in the heart of Le Logis. Since the beginning, it has been managed jointly by residents and professional farmers whose various activities are grouped together as a non-profit association under the name La Ferme du Chant des Cailles. Its future, however, is threatened by the city's densification. This situation echoes the way my research questions the place of commons in the city. It raises the question of the management of these commons, of the balance between city and countryside, and alternatives to current market dynamics.

What future for housing cooperatives?

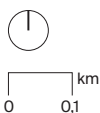
Today, as in the past, Brussels faces significant demographic pressure throughout the metropolitan area. How can the quality of its environment be either maintained or improved for everyone in spite of this



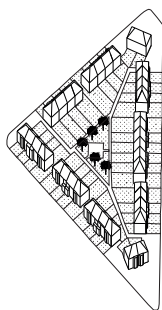
1. «Le Fer à cheval»
2. «Les Trois Tilleuls»
3. Place du Logis
4. Le Stade
5. «La Ferme du chant des cailles»

S1,2,... = Simone's dwelling
M1,2,... = Marc's dwelling
Ma1,2,... = Marie's dwelling
Su1,2,... = Suzanne's dwelling
Mi1,2,... = Michèle's dwelling

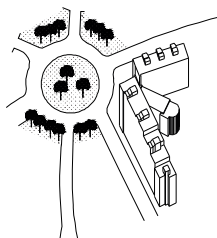
■ Le Logis-Floréal



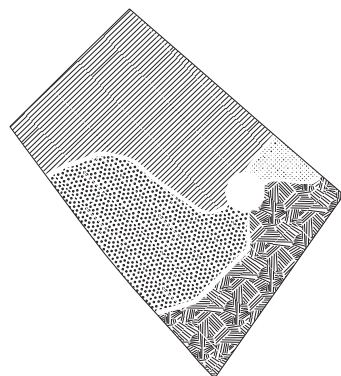
A. Common spaces in garden centres



B. The square of «Les Trois Tilleuls»



C. La Ferme du Chant des Cailles



inevitable densification? At the metropolitan scale, this implies producing urban development capable of including social and cultural diversity and giving the population access to a city both dense and open. This also implies defining density differently by testing new formulas of common spaces within collective housing projects in order to break with the classic definition of individualized square metres/unit of surface.

The production of collective housing in Brussels is the initiative of two main public organs. The first is the Housing Corporation of the Brussels Capital Region (SLRB). It is a regional institution in charge of social housing that recognizes and controls the different public service real estate companies (SISP). SISPs are public limited companies or cooperatives whose capital is predominantly owned by public authorities. Their mission is to provide people who meet the conditions of admission with social housing and to care for the housing's daily management (purchase, remodelling, renovation). They manage over 39,000 social housing units in the Brussels Capital Region. Before the sixth state reform, the region had 33 SISPs, including the 11 cooperatives described in this paper. Today, they have merged into 18 companies.

The second public organ is the Development Corporation for the Brussels Capital Region (Citydev). Its mission is to produce new housing for middle-income residents in neighbourhoods characterized by a deficit in residential construction with the aim of maintaining or bringing back residents to the region. These different housing projects are realized through a partnership between the public and the private sectors.

In addition to these two main organisations, the housing offer also includes the housing services of each municipality, 'Le Fonds du Logement' and Social Housing Agencies (AIS). The Housing Fund of the Brussels Capital Region is a cooperative society created in 1989 by the family movement, namely 'La Ligue des Familles' and the 'Gezinsbond' following the regionalization of housing policy. The fund pursues missions of public utility and thus offers households with medium or modest incomes mortgages, construction/renovation-sale operations,

rental aid, or regional loans to provide a rental guarantee. AIS act as intermediaries between owners and tenants. It is aimed at households in a precarious situation or with low income.

However, the growing demand is difficult to meet. If only the documented demand is considered, about 65,000 households are on one (or more) waiting list(s) to rent or buy public housing. In addition, it becomes difficult for regional operators of homes to acquire land at a reasonable price in Brussels.³ That is why, for several years, in order to cope with the housing crisis or as an alternative to living in an individualistic society, many initiatives have promoted a form of cooperation or community.

One form of initiative is group housing, which exists in different forms. Brussels examples include the '123' building occupied by some 60 people thanks to a precarious occupation agreement; 'La Poudrière', a self-managed community formed in 1958; and 'Brutopia', a cohousing project inaugurated in 2013 by 84 inhabitants. Another form is the community land trust, a home ownership model for low-income households founded in the United States in the 1960s. The CLT model considers land a common good that must be preserved, protected against speculation, and managed by the community for the community's well-being. The Community Land Trust Brussels (CLTB) is currently fully subsidized by the region, meaning its flexibility is severely restricted.

The following map shows the 11 Brussels cooperatives created at two specific moments in history; the first ones after the First World War, between September 1921 and August 1922, and the remaining ones after the Second World War, between April 1949 and September 1950. They are located on the outskirts of the Brussels Capital Region.

On the map, the black dots represent cohousing projects and the white squares represent planned or actual CLTs. It is interesting to note that both are located in the urban revitalization area ('ZRU'). Most of these projects were

3. PRDD, Plan Régional de Développement Durable, version approuvée par le gouvernement de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale en date du 12 juillet 2018.



Past and present housing alternatives in Brussels
(source: author)

made possible by grants from the region. Indeed, within this area, Brussels supports municipalities that acquire real estate and make it suitable for housing, promote green spaces, grant a premium for the beautification of facades, etc. This raises the possibility of developing a larger cooperative project in other parts of the region.

Given these initiatives and its history, the cooperative model seems to have the potential to produce new structures for collective living. Yet in Brussels, because of new restrictions such as no longer allowing heirs to access the states of coop-owners and the legal framework surrounding them, the model is no longer chosen as an innovative alternative. In Switzerland, on the other hand, there has been a renewed interest in the cooperative model over the past 20 years, and today 20% of the Swiss population lives in a cooperative. The model is also widely developed in Canada and Italy, whose housing cooperatives are based on the same model but are nonetheless diverse and have experienced a growing eclecticism over time. In Brussels, we find them today either in the form of tenant cooperatives or building/renovation cooperatives, but in both cases, they are investor and not user cooperatives.⁴

Autonomy as a condition for an alternative

The cooperative is seen here as a ‘third way’ of housing production, between the private market and the public market, between the acquisitive market and the rental housing market, and – as the research suggests – it could meet the needs of the metropolitan territory of Brussels, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The historical and ethnographic analysis carried out in this paper raises several elements relating to the three dimensions of research.

First, concerning the organisational dimension, the research hypothesis is that cooperatives allow for access to and regulation of the real estate market. Cooperatives have the capacity, as the third way between the public market and the private market,

4.

Bernard, N., De Pauw, G. and Géronnez, L. (2010) ‘Coopératives de logement et Community Land Trusts’, *courriers hebdomadaires du CRISP*, 28 (2073), 5-52, p. 21.

to overcome current market laws. The cooperatives' benefits for common needs can be reinvested in spaces other than housing. The difficulty for tenants of current cooperatives in Brussels is that they are constrained by the rules of the Housing Code in terms of social housing. The future inhabitants do not choose to become cooperators, which can impact their future investment in their management. Another element that seems to play a role in the cooperators' investment is the fact that their heirs no longer have any advantage. Finally, in the current system, the tenant of a cooperative no longer has a very different status from that of a typical tenant. This difference is mainly at the level of governance: the system of one person one vote allows all inhabitants to invest in decision-making and the election of administrators. Here, too, the research reveals a lack of investment by the cooperators. The question that arises is therefore whether to give cooperatives more flexibility even if they are partially subsidized by the region.

Second, concerning the spatial dimension, the research hypothesis is that cooperatives require that city spaces be redefined as common spaces. The inhabitants' relationship to the neighbourhood, city and territory is modified. At issue is finding spaces that could accommodate new cooperatives in light of the land pressure affecting Brussels territory. Especially, this model becomes interesting as soon as the number of inhabitants is sufficiently important. Provision of subsidies by the region to entities outside the urban revitalization area ('ZRU') should perhaps be considered in this case.

Third, concerning the social dimension, research supports the hypothesis that cooperation allows for inclusion of a greater range of social groups. This is because members are shareholders, which awakens a sense of involvement and responsibility in relation to the environment, and, compared to the acquisitive system, cooperatives offer the possibility of shifting the distribution of housing as families evolve. This inclusion is also achieved through the mix of functions cooperatives offer. Eventually, through its common management the cooperative makes it possible to create jobs that meet the community's needs. The difficulty, which seems to affect Brussels cooperatives,

is to maintain the cooperative spirit after several generations. It seems that only first or second generation inhabitants maintained it.

Finally, this analysis highlights three main elements of research. The first relates to the management autonomy and flexibility that cooperatives can obtain in the Brussels context. The second relates to the land space available to accommodate projects of this magnitude. The third concerns the maintenance of the cooperative spirit over time.

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Still dancing

Sustainable dwelling and old age

Olivier Masson

Old age is generally considered a time of decline, leading to dependence and an increase in certain (deeply stigmatizing) amenities. This may lead to the assumption that sustainability is irrelevant to the elderly. This paper takes a completely opposite approach, by questioning how elderly people can be empowered and, using their experience and motivated by specific wishes, reinvent polyvalence. First, considerations regarding empowerment and polyvalence will be discussed, followed by an analysis of a project carried out by seniors: the Woonvereniging Voormekaar, located in Boxmeer in the Netherlands.¹ Eventually, the lesson learnt goes beyond the realm of senior housing and becomes valid for everyone and every age, ageing being just a pretext or a context for architectural ambition.

1.

The case of the Voormekaar house was discovered during visits in 2014 and 2015 in Belgium, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Holland and Switzerland concerning alternative forms of housing for the elderly. This research led to the *Habitat & Vieillessement* report (<https://www.qualidom.be/wp-content/themes/qualidom/files/habitat-et-vieillessement.pdf>).

Introduction

If globalization and its acceleration² allow a small number of people to acquire unparalleled power, on average they mathematically reduce the relative significance of each remaining individual. Such an individual, that is, possesses less significance proportionally in a globalized and overpopulated world than he or she would in a village. Contrary to this quantitative observation, the diminishing authority of political and religious powers and a weakening reproduction of social positions allow a self-determined development of persons and groups to expand in a way that technological supports will amplify. The idea of a subordinate authority capable of saying what needs to be done and how everybody should act is fading.

At the same time, the experience and expertise people gain during their lives is being acknowledged more frequently. 'Simply' from the lives they have led, poor people (i.e. the ATD Fourth World Movement), the disabled (i.e. DownUp Association), young and old have gained valuable experience that is increasingly recognized (when will this be the case for refugees?) and on which to base trust and develop their capacity. Dealing with empowerment, as this publication intends to do, is to emphasize individual and group development without ignoring the overall situation and the need for interactions with others, with confidence in what everyone can do or become. Addressing empowerment through housing, by facing the reality of declining common narratives in favour of individual expertise, is also a way of recognizing the importance of the physical dimension of housing to concrete and direct support of communal harmony.³

2.

Rosa, H. and Renault, D. (2013) *Accélération: Une critique sociale du temps*, Paris: La Découverte.

3.

In French, the expression '*le vivre ensemble*' expresses the idea of different groups living together peacefully in a pluralistic society.

Empowerment and polyvalence: dwelling for seniors

Three ways to empower seniors

Seniors are also recognized for their expertise. The WHO Age-Friendly Cities and Communities project trusts seniors. It is, more specifically, a process that advocates a conception of the city that is made by, for and with the elderly.⁴ Through its six stages and iterations, the process aims to integrate seniors' views into the city and acquire a reflexively senior-centric decision-making processes.

If the process results in actions that will improve, among other things, the social inclusion of seniors, it can also enable them to develop abilities. Seniors work and change while working, discovering new skills. One has to wonder how far seniors can carry the process on their own. The process unfolds according to eight themes including housing.⁵ The housing sector for the elderly is divided into three categories defined by the question of empowerment. First, home help services make it possible to live longer at home, which is the desire of a majority of people. Second, institutional housing (nursing homes, rest homes) defines more life projects centred on self-determination and rather than dependence (it is a legal obligation in the Walloon Region). Third, new forms of collective housing as an alternative to home care or institutional care provide autonomy and mutual support;⁶ the Voormekaar project is one example: it is exemplary in its implementation by elderly residents and could therefore be seen as a demonstration of 'grey power'.

4.

The Age-Friendly City project was conceived in 2005 at the XVIII World Congress of Gerontology and Geriatrics in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). In 2006, WHO launched a first large-scale consultation of 33 cities in 22 countries that engaged in a process of identifying the needs of urban seniors by involving them, as well as those who provide them with support (caregivers) and services (providers). Garon, S., Beaulieu, M. and Veil, A. (2008) 'Le programme Villes amies des aînés de l'Organisation mondiale de la santé : une occasion de reconnaissance pour les aînés', *Éthique publique*, 10(2), 117-125.

5.

See 'Global Age-friendly Cities : A Guide. 2010. World Health Organization', http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf.

6.

See 'Habitat & Vieillessement'. Following a logic tree built with six questions, this study presents an inventory of 88 theoretical housing situations that support seniors' autonomy. Masson, O., Vanneste, D., Baës-Cantillon, N. and Grabczan, R. (2015) *Habitat et vieillissement. Inventaire des formes de logements qui supportent l'interdépendance et l'autonomie des seniors*, Louvain-la-Neuve: UCLouvain.

Having reached an age at which infirmity (for example, visual impairment) is common, seniors are concerned about maintaining their physical and mental abilities. What will their future abilities be? What should be planned to preserve them? Or better, what should be done to support future empowerment, to continue personal development? Through these questions, older people question the sustainability of empowerment.⁷ Today, actions are being taken that involve integrating decisions for making life easier for residents when they get older.⁸ The Voormekaar project takes such actions.

Polyvalence

In the architectural field, the term *polyvalence* is regularly associated with a single space. In French, 'une salle polyvalente' (a multipurpose room) defines a space large enough to accommodate multiple activities. The four-by-four-meter room and the eight-by-eight-meter classroom have demonstrated their polyvalence⁹. However, if versatility can be found inside a place, it can just as well be found in the proximity of differentiated spaces, even when it carries an additional economic and spatial cost (and therefore an impact on sustainability). Potentials are no longer concentrated in a space but deployed side by side. To escape from the connotation of single places with which the term 'polyvalence' is associated, we will refer to *multiple availabilities*.¹⁰

Note that we can find in one project spaces that are enriched by their proximity to a very versatile space. For example, the parks designed by Michel Corajoud

7.

In 2014 in Belgium, *La Fondation Roi Baudouin* supported several actions of this initiative through its campaign '*Pensez plus tôt à plus tard*' (<http://www.avosprojets.be/>).

8.

See Dutilleux, P. and Grabczan, R. (2017) *Guide d'aide à la conception et à la création d'un Habitat Amis Des Aînés (H.A.D.A.)*, Paris: Edilivre ; Beyeler, M. (2014) *Métamorphose: Transformer sa maison au fil de la vie*, Lausanne: Presses polytechniques et universitaires romandes.

9.

Ledent, G. (2017) 'Permanence to allow Change. The archetypal room: the persistence of the 4x4 room' in Rodrigues, M. J., da Costa, C., Roseta, F., Pestana Lages, J. and Couceiro da Costa, S., eds., *Architectural Research Addressing Societal Challenges: Proceedings of the EAAE ARCC 10th International Conference*, Lisbon: RCR Press, 339-345.

10.

For a parallel concept, see Grabczan, R. (2015) 'La ville disponible' in Hanin, Y., ed. *Cinquante ans d'action territoriale. Un socle, des pistes pour le futur*, Louvain-la-Neuve: Presses universitaires de Louvain.

include neighbouring places that invite visitors to a series of activities and a larger expanse of grass whose purpose is not indicated and is thus open to multiple appropriations. At the Parc de Gerland, located along the Rhone river, south-east of Lyon, sport and games are prepared in a series of paddocks (ping-pong, swings, etc.) alongside a meadow with no indication of where one can walk, lie down, gather in a circle with friends, roll in the grass or play football.¹¹

Beyond the question of uses and the physical dimension of housing, the concept of multiple availabilities also makes it easier to analyse two other dimensions of housing: location (multiple availabilities allow the possibility of taking diversified exposure positions relative to others) and courses (possibility to choose different routes depending on one's mood or physical condition).

Older people are positively characterized by greater life experience. They know what can produce discomfort or conflict and have greater perspective. In terms of spaces, this life experience will feed the definition of devices conceived to lessen difficulties (for example, to avoid excessive proximity) and to emphasize the most important points (social relations more than social representations). The contribution of the elderly to housing for all is based on their wisdom, which helps refine the composition.

We will therefore seek multiple availabilities deployed in collective housing for seniors to preserve their relationships and develop their abilities. Six availabilities (two locations, two courses, two uses) will be addressed in the Voormekaar project.

The Voormekaar house

The second part of this paper will study the case of the Voormekaar house. To understand its functioning,

11. See <http://corajoudmichel.nerim.net/les-quatre-parcs/parcdegerland/gerlpresgen.html> or Masson, O. (2009) 'L'événement, horizon de la conception' in *Cahiers thématiques*, Paris: Editions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, Ecole nationale supérieure d'architecture et de paysage de Lille.

12. Visit and observations on 28 May 2014 and interviews with the inhabitants Toon Pijpers and Koosje van der Horst-Schrier.

we used an on-site interview, a site visit, observations¹² and an analysis of its layout. The statements of the inhabitants and the observed appropriations are compared to the architectural layout in order to build a complete understanding of the project.

We worked according to a theoretical triad that holds that a house is an alignment of intentions, composition and activities. Intentions are the initial aspirations thought to improve or please us. Intentions are revealed by questioning the owners. The composition is the material implementation of the plans of the architect. The activities correspond to the actions and practices of the users. Appropriations can be observed and interviews with users help understand them.

Multiple availabilities represent the spectrum of possible appropriations. They are driven by intentions and are supported by the built framework. After factual elements, some general intentions and the main features of the composition of Voormekaar will first be characterized before the six availabilities are described.

Facts

The Voormekaar project includes 12 apartments in a private property. Designed by Eharchitecten¹³ in 2007, it is located in the small town of Boxmeer. The initiative is private with no public funding.¹⁴ The inhabitants were able to do what they wanted in accordance with the regulations in force. We are well aware that the inhabitants have a certain economic and cultural capital. But we do not believe it motivated the architecture.

Intentions: general orientations

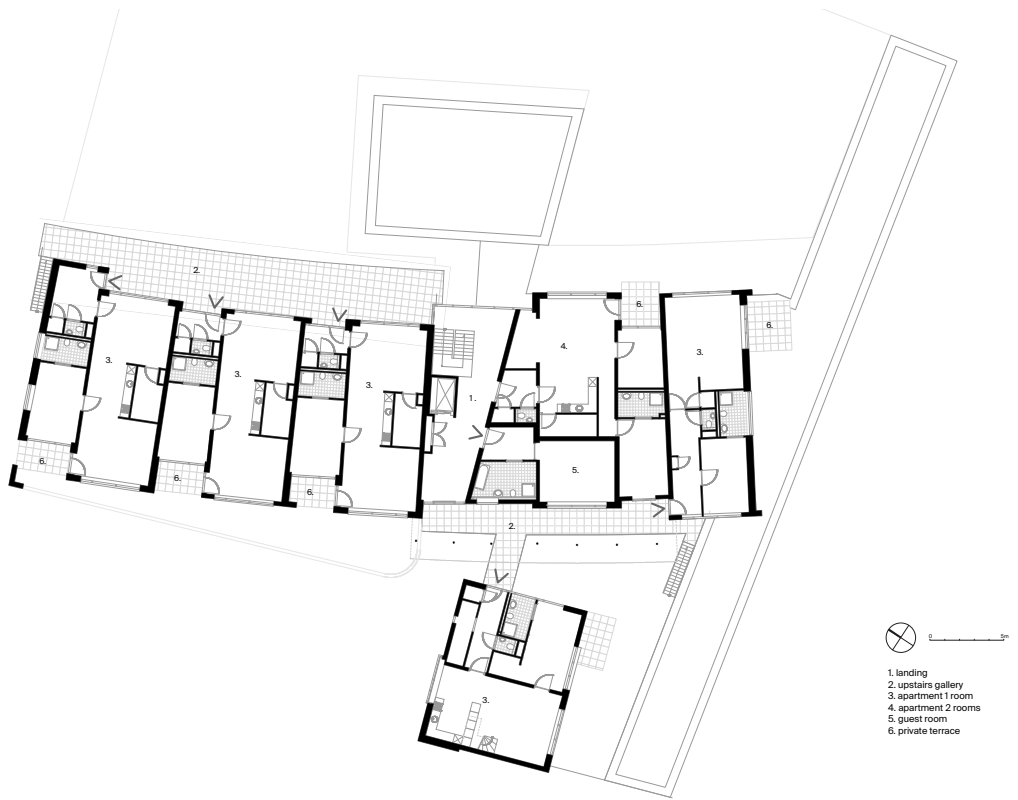
The Voormekaar habitat was born of the wishes of one of its residents who wanted to live in a community similar to that of a monastery but without the vows of poverty, chastity or obedience. A ten-year process was necessary to fulfil the ambition of its initiator: founding a 21st century beguinage.

¹³.

<http://www.eharchitecten.nl/>

¹⁴.

Yet it received the help of a specialized body in Common Housing for the elderly (<http://www.lvgo.nl/>).



Ground and first floor
(source: author)

Voormekaar, literally 'for one another', is a group housing project for the elderly. It proposes that its inhabitants form a group. The group implies more than a community with a shared address but less than a community that shares beliefs. The project was designed to allow art-loving people over 55 to live in proximity to each other at the same pace and quietly watch over each other. The housing combines respect for privacy and sharing of spaces and activities for economic reasons, social benefits (mutual support), and lifestyles, while being open, in a controlled way, to the outside world.¹⁵

We will see how these three intentions of privacy, sharing and measured openness nourish *multiple availabilities*.

Composition and components

The project is located in a quiet residential area, at the edge of town. It is close to the city centre, shops and large natural and landscaped areas (the Meuse River is 300 meters away). Its overall appearance results from the ensemble of several living units, each consisting of two apartments. These small units, reminiscent of single-family homes, give a home-like appearance to the architectural ensemble: the choice of different materials for some units (brick or white plaster) reinforces this feeling of diversity. The cohesion of the whole stems from the repetition of the units.

The project is built around a large common hall located in the garden – we will call it the garden room – and accessible through the extension of the main entrance. The complex has 12 apartments and many collective spaces beside the garden room: the laundry room, workshops (painting, DIY, gardening), the garden, a large landing with sport equipment. The constitution and distribution of some spaces produce *multiple availabilities* that serve privacy, sharing and openness. If their forms support potential practices, choosing which is left to the residents.

Elements of multiple availability

This chapter focuses on six elements of the composition that seem to provide availabilities (two of position,

^{15.}

See the project philosophy at <https://voormekaar.wordpress.com/>.



↑↑
Street view
(source: author)

↑
One apartment
(source: author)

two courses, two uses) to the inhabitants.

The plan's composition makes it possible for residents to take different positions both in the whole project and in the big hall.

Positions throughout the project

The position of the different apartments is defined by the common areas (garden room and common circulation).

There are apartments at the same level as the garden room, upstairs apartments with a view on the garden room, and others in the back and in connection with the street.

But beyond their relative positions that can hardly be switched,¹⁶ the apartments have three things in common.

First, a generous surface area (similar to that of the large hall in the garden) of 90 to 120 m² that allows residents to host visitors and feel fully at home. They have the option but are not impelled to use the common areas via a narrow personal access space that is found in dwellings with more of a community focus, such as the Abbeyfield houses.¹⁷

Secondly, because each inhabitant has an outdoor area, patio or balcony, the use of the common garden becomes a greater possibility.

As the notion of intimacy was central to the project's development and success, special attention was paid to the insulation of the apartments. Each apartment has an entrance hall to manage the passage between shared and personal spaces. In a small community, it is important not to suffer from the cooking smells or sounds of neighbours. This layout thus allows everyone to decide whether to socialize. The residents can use the common spaces or retire to their apartments.

Positions in the garden room

The same logic prevails in the garden room. While all service spaces are gathered behind a long wall, the rest of the room is largely glazed towards the northwest side. The occupants of the large hall can choose their positions. Either they place themselves in the centre of the room,

¹⁶.

It is often a decoy of architects to offer a wide variety of housing by pleading for an enrichment of the choices because people have little choice and do not move easily.

¹⁷.

See <http://www.abbeyfield.be/fr/> to understand the purpose of these participatory and rental grouped housings.



Upstairs gallery
(source: author)

The garden room
(source: author)



remaining hidden from the others by the service spaces, or they can sit by the large northwest windows through which they can be seen from the apartments to the west, which thus signals their presence and tacit desire for company. This part of the common room is occupied by the small table where a snack is regularly shared at around 11am – a moment to socialize.

The following two points describe the multiple possibilities of moving around.

Pathways throughout the project

As shown on the floor plan, there are three staircases (two exterior straight and one interior with a landing in a large bright space). Paths, corridors and stairs offer different ways to access the home. The tenant can decide to go by one or the other front doors, through the common areas or go home directly and discreetly.

Attention for future pathways

Regarding circulations, other measures were taken in anticipation of days when personal mobility will be more difficult. Here are some examples:

- There must be no obstacles or steps, owing to the use of walkers and wheelchairs.
- Doorways must be at least one meter wide.
- Sliding doors should be installed wherever possible.
- Sockets and switches must be at a height of 75 cm in order to be accessible by people in wheelchairs.
- The lift must be large enough to accommodate a bed.

In application of these principles, the gallery upstairs is wide enough to allow two wheelchairs to pass one another. This also increases the privacy of the apartments, since one can walk far enough away from a window so as not to be seen from outside.

The last two points propose various values of use.

Garden room uses

The big hall of 100m² (the average size of a home) is the living space of the group. Sports activities (people have built a foldable ping-pong table), group meals or family celebrations can be organized. This space and the distance

from the entrance to the hall also allow for modulating the reception of visitors. The garden room is occasionally turned into a concert hall or used for ceremonies (especially after the death of one of the inhabitants).

Effects of a special room

Finally, we would like to address two adjoining spaces that have two particular uses. These are rooms four (listed as a guest room) and five (bathroom). The bathroom has a large bath specially designed in anticipation of future disabilities. The bathroom forms a small suite with the adjoining room that can accommodate people who change the general dynamic: a temporary caregiver, a family member paying a visit. It seems to us that this special feature must be the pride of the inhabitants: allowing grandchildren to come and stay near their grandparents but not in their home. We see there a difference compared to what is usually done which makes this space a potential room of emancipation or empowerment occupied 170 nights a year.

The explicit desire to implement multiple solutions shows that seniors have not lost their empowerment. They are able to invent forms of availability that give possibilities to future generations. The project also teaches an economic lesson. The inhabitants have left behind large houses but now share a large room, workshops, and equipment that they could not afford individually. They moved in with all their garden tools. After discussions, they kept three rakes and gave away the others. At Voormekaar, tenants own less individually but more collectively. This economic lesson is added to that of the wise multiple availabilities and is valid for all.

Conclusion

In the diagram on page 17, empowerment and polyvalence are placed on perpendicular axes. They are not strangers to each other. Humans with higher abilities will profit more from versatility. Increased spatial versatility will invite and challenge tenants to mobilize or develop potential uses.

Reciprocal benefits are welcome, but empowerment and polyvalence have limits. Human beings, whatever



↑
Inside the garden room
(source: author)

↓
The guest room
(source: author)



their pedagogical desires or pressures they are under, cannot become infinitely able. They have limits. Similarly, if emptiness is fundamentally versatile (it is almost a pleonasm), at one point it will need matter (limits). Therefore, polyvalence cannot be absolute. If it was, it would not support any use, it would attract pure indifference, and it would be necessary to implement conditions of use.

Empowerment and 'empolyvalencing' are the possibilities of moving potentials and limits. At all ages, skills and limits emerge. This understanding of empowerment as limited and changing is important for older people to escape the perspective of decline. Some abilities are maintained and new ones acquired.

We think that human and spatial limits dance together. We see dance as a harmonious metaphor for the perpetual movements and adjustments that can exist between different animate materialities. There is a balance, or not, between able and limited humans and versatile and limited spaces. For human beings, living is to enter into this balance with space. It is putting their skills in relation to the versatility of space.

The founders of Voormekaar developed a project based on their experience and their ability to anticipate the future. For a target audience whose age is sometimes considered to be one of decline, they took the risk of the unknown. The beneficiaries have initiated a new dance. Every day they invent a way of inhabiting places and living together. After a few years together, after departures and arrivals, the cookie jar of the garden room is still mysteriously filled, a plough that requires little force was invented, an easy-to-fold ping-pong table was built ... They are still dancing.

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Authors

Gérald Ledent

Gérald Ledent is an architectural engineer who graduated from UCLouvain, Belgium, and OSU, USA. He is a professor at UCLouvain in Brussels, where he teaches theory and in various studios. He holds a PhD in architecture that explores the relationships between spaces and uses in domestic space. Dr Ledent plays a co-coordination role in the *Uses&Spaces* research team, in which his research interests focus on the relationship in architecture between uses and spaces, housing typo-morphologies and research by design. He has extensive experience in the fields of public buildings and collective housing developments in Belgium and abroad. He is also the co-founder of KIS studio (*Keep It Simple studio*), which aims to avoid unnecessary complexity in order to focus on the essentials.

Chloé Salembier

Chloé Salembier is an ethnologist and lecturer at UCLouvain. She teaches social sciences and co-coordinates the *Uses&Spaces* research team. She develops research on housing at different scales based on qualitative methodologies at the crossroads of human sciences, architecture and urban planning. These current research themes focus on precariousness, gender and the notion of commons.

Damien Vanneste

Damien Vanneste is associate professor at the Catholic University of Lille (France). He works in the research team HADéPaS (specialized in participatory research on disability and ageing). His work focuses mainly on sociological studies about the links between ageing, housing and territories. He also teaches at UCLouvain (Belgium), where he is a member of the *Uses&Spaces* research team. He has recently published an article in the anthology *D'une ville à l'autre. La comparaison internationale en sociologie urbaine* (Editions La Découverte, Paris). He has also coordinated with Sébastien Fevry the most recent issue of the journal *Les Politiques sociales*, whose title is 'Art, médiation culturelle et territoires'.

Nicolas Bernard

Nicolas Bernard has a degree in philosophy and a PhD in law and is a professor at Université Saint-Louis-Brussels. With more than 25 years of expertise in housing law, he manages the *Institut de recherches interdisciplinaires sur Bruxelles* (Interdisciplinary Brussels Studies Institute) and sits on Wallonia's housing board (*Conseil supérieur du logement de Wallonie*), having previously sat on the Brussels Capital Region's advisory board on housing (*Conseil consultatif du logement de la RBC*). He also worked as an expert in various ministerial first secretaries' offices for ten years. His research concerns leases, the right to housing, alternative housing, housing for travellers, property, common goods, CLTs, the homeless, squatting, etc.

Philippe De Clerck

Philippe De Clerck is an assistant teacher at the ULB Faculty of Architecture, and research fellow at sASHa (Architecture et Sciences Humaines) and LoUIsE (Laboratory of Urbanism, Infrastructures and Ecology). His research focuses on grassroots practices of housing decommodification through communing practices, and the relationships they maintain with their physical context of existence. He previously co-organized the Master Classes RE:WORK (2013) and END OF LINE (2014) on key urban issues for the development of Brussels, and was a collaborator of the Brussels 'J]pyblik['centre of public space expertise. Philippe is a founding partner of the architecture and urbanism practice DEV-space.

Thomas Dawance

Thomas Dawance is an architect and sociologist. He is currently a project developer at the Community Land Trust Brussels (CLTB) and a Cosmopolis/BAS - VUB PhD student. He worked in the Research Area at the ULB Urban Research Center before becoming advisor to the former State Secretary for Housing of the Brussels Region. Especially concerned about social justice and empowerment issues, he has also been engaged in Brussels' squatting movement and various housing associations.

Herman Hertzberger

Herman Hertzberger is a Dutch architect who taught as a professor at the Delft University of Technology. He is considered one of the founders of the structuralist movement. He strongly believes in user participation as a fundamental part of a building's life. Hence, architects are to provide a framework with which users would play an active role. Some of his built work illustrates this position: *Central Beheer*, 'Diagoon' houses, Delft's *Montessori school*, etc. In addition to his practice, he has published several books including *Lessons for Students in Architecture, Space and Learning* and *Architecture and Structuralism*.

Andreas Hofer

Andreas Hofer was born in Lucerne. He studied architecture at the Swiss Institute for Technology in Zurich. In 2018 he was elected director of the International Building Exhibition in Stuttgart (*Internationale Bauausstellung 2027 StadtRegion Stuttgart*). In Zurich he was a partner in the planning and architectural office Archipel. He mainly worked as a consultant and project developer for innovative cooperative housing projects such as *Kraftwerk1* and *Mehr als Wohnen* ('More than Housing'). Andreas Hofer writes regularly about city development and housing issues. He is also a regular member of juries for architectural competitions and delivers lectures at universities.

Olivier Masson

Olivier Masson is a civil engineer architect, with a PhD in applied sciences. He is a professor in the UCLouvain Faculty of Architecture, Architectural Engineering and Urban Planning, where he teaches architectural design, architectural history, analysis and composition of buildings and research seminars. His research domain is environmental design with special interests in the elderly and educational spaces. His works are carried out within the *Uses&Spaces* Research Group and the Louvain4Ageing and Louvain4Education multidisciplinary platforms.

Boris Nauleau

Boris Nauleau is a teacher at the National School of Architecture in Nantes, a government consultant architect, and an architect at the Claas Architects agency, which he founded with Fabienne Legros, Michel Bazantay and Claire Toscer. After receiving the 2014 Albums of Young Architects and Landscapers Award, he helped curate the French Pavilion at the 2016 XV Biennale of Architecture in Venice, entitled '*New Riches*', reflecting how ordinary architecture involves territories and users. This active and social dimension is at the heart of Claas Architects. The agency advocates a pragmatic approach: the ability of spatial structures to create evolving and generous living spaces.

Anna Ternon

Anna Ternon is an urban planner (UCLouvain 2016) and an architect (UCLouvain 2015), a PhD student in the UCLouvain-LOCI team at Metrolab.brussels, and a teaching assistant in the advanced master's programme in urban and regional planning. Her PhD research focuses on the democratic processes of the urban project, through the spatial, social and organisational dimensions, in the context of the Brussels metropolitan area.

Jean-Louis Violeau

Jean-Louis Violeau is a professor at the École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Nantes as well as a researcher at CRENAU (the Nantes Centre of Urban World Architecture Research, Ambiance Architecture Urban World (AAU) UMR-CNRS). He is a member of the editorial committee of the Nantes urban journal *Place Publique*. In 2016, he was curator of *Architectures habitées de l'Île de Nantes, 2010-2016*, an exhibition at the School of Architecture, whose catalogue was entitled *L'Île de Samoa à Nantes*.

Acknowledgements

Sustainable Dwelling owes a special debt of gratitude to Christian Leleux for granting us the opportunity of working on this fascinating topic. We would also like to thank Gilles Debrun and Daria Bocharnicova who partnered with us in the early stages of the project. We are immensely grateful to all the authors for their contributions and their patience throughout the publication process. We would also like to express our gratitude to Herman Hertzberger for our exchanges on the concept of polyvalence and for prefacing this book. Moreover, a very special thanks goes to Catherine Fasbender and Lee Gillette who helped our English sound like English. In addition, Brigitte De Terwangne must be thanked for her logistical assistance. We also thank Anaïs Cuillier very warmly for her minute graphic work that made this publication possible and look like a real book! We must pay a special tribute to all the residents of the projects that we visited for their valuable time and their willingness to let us know more about their domestic practices. Finally, this publication was made possible thanks to the support of UCLouvain and the Research Commission of the Catholic University of Lille.

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*'Still I cannot but think it an evil sign of
a people when their houses are built to last
for one generation only. There is a sanctity
in a good man's house which cannot be
renewed in every tenement that rises
on its ruins.'*

John Ruskin

This book examines the social and spatial dimensions of dwelling from the perspective of sustainability. This publication avoids the traditional energy and technological dimensions of sustainability to position the notion of sustainable dwelling at the crossroads of spatial polyvalence and residents' empowerment. In the field of housing, this publication identifies the recurrent properties of 'sustainable space' and the variety of the socio-cultural practices that can embody them. Its purpose is to comprehend how the concept of sustainability is reflected in housing spaces as well as to analyse how inhabitants put those spaces to the test.

This publication collects the contributions of several authors gathered for a two-day workshop on collective housing from a spatial or social perspective in May 2017. This publication is also a follow-up to various case studies conducted in Nantes and Zurich by a team of teacher-researchers (architects and socio-anthropologists) from UCLouvain/UCLille. Their research activities were funded by the Christian Leleux Grant, which promotes research on sustainability in the fields of architecture and urban design.

Authors:

N. Bernard, T. Dawance, P. De Clerck, H. Hertzberger, A. Hofer, G. Ledent, O. Masson, B. Nauleau, C. Salembier, A. Ternon, D. Vanneste, J.L. Violeau.