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Allweil, Yael; Caramellino, Gaia

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Editorial

The Terms of Dwelling

Yael Allweil^{1,*} and Gaia Caramellino²¹ Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning, Technion—Israel Institute of Technology, Israel² Department of Architecture and Urban Studies, Politecnico di Milano, Italy

* Corresponding author (aryael@technion.ac.il)

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Abstract

This thematic issue re-articulates the question of housing as an architectural and planning problem and examines how architecture can contribute to reduce the divorce between housing provision and architectural research. The articles included in the issue investigate the terminology used to designate housing as a way to question the relation between housing, architecture, and planning, and investigate and theorize the language of housing in relation to the emergence of new and varied modes of inhabiting. Built on a heterogeneous corpus of terms, the articles offer a new outlook on the current housing crisis and the role of architecture in it. The papers unpack selected housing terms via close historical inquiry of specific case studies, housing typologies, policies and codes, discourses, and schemes, and contribute to explore the social, economic, political, and design dimensions of housing by inquiring the origin, evolution, codification, and diverse usage and meanings of selected terms. This collection of terms defines a theoretical frame to recasting architecture as a crucial aspect of housing provision, reconnecting design to policy and finance, and laying the ground for envisioning the capacities of architecture in a post-neoliberal society. Specific terms, concepts, and notions are examined by the authors in relation to their understanding in the housing discourse and practice, while other terms are analyzed in relation to their multiple origins and changing meanings, when terms migrated in diverse fields (normative, political, planning, administrative, financial) or across countries, disciplines, and cultures.

Keywords

architecture; housing; housing crisis; planning; terminology; theory

Issue

This editorial is part of the issue “The Terms of Dwelling: Re-Theorizing Housing Through Architecture” edited by Yael Allweil (Technion—Israel Institute of Technology) and Gaia Caramellino (Politecnico di Milano).

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In the framework of the contemporary global housing crisis, housing has a central, unquestioned role for individuals’ access to employment, education, and political citizenship. Thus, the current global crisis involves remarkably similar issues, even if the concrete causes of housing disparity seem unrelated. Whether access to housing is challenged through war and persecution, lack of formal planning, or the growing unaffordability of housing as a market product, the effects are the same: the reappearance of substandard tenements, lack of housing options, involuntary displacement, and growing spatial and economic inequality.

For several decades, architecture has been glaringly absent from both the analysis of and responses to the

housing crisis. This is in stark contrast to the history of 20th-century modern architecture, in which architects played a decisive role in defining mass housing as a social need to be provided as a public good. Then, housing design and production constituted the ground for architectural and planning experiments, playing a crucial role also in the shaping and transformation of the urban fabric.

Two dominant interpretive frameworks were proposed for this lack. The first is explained by the state’s detachment from the national housing project in the mid-1970s, the dismantling of the welfare state and privatization, and later the neoliberalization of housing markets. In this analysis, the social framework for housing

as a public good has been removed. The second framework points to the tight constraints of housing design, even at the high end of the market, by regulatory and financial considerations, leaving little room for architects' expression. Consequently, "architecture" as cultural product is often seen as separate from "housing" as a socio-economic need.

Nonetheless, the past few years saw the re-emergence of the question of housing design in architects' education and theoretical research. Re-theorizing the architecture of housing as an intrinsic part of the social, financial, political, and territorial aspects of dwelling is an urgent component of the critical assessment of past and current experiences and the goal of providing insights to tackle contemporary challenges. This thematic issue of *Urban Planning* intends to question how the architectural discipline can contribute to reduce the divorce between housing provision and architectural research, as well as re-articulate the question of housing as an architectural and planning problem.

The issue proposes to investigate the terminology used to designate housing as a way to question the relation between housing, architecture, and planning culture, and rethink the language of housing in relation to the emergence of new and varied modes of inhabiting.

The articles included in this thematic issue explore several terminological aspects of the architecture of housing by taking an architectural and urban history approach to the study of terminology. The articles unpack selected housing terms via close historical inquiry of specific case studies, housing typologies, policies and codes, discourses, and schemes. They contribute to explore the social, economic, political, and design dimensions of housing by inquiring the origin, evolution, codification, and diverse usage and meanings of selected terms.

Fijalkow (2022) provides a historical analysis of the circulation of the concept of *housing need* between the social sciences and architectural design fields in France since the second half of the 19th century until today. The article looks at three time periods: the beginning of housing policy which defined "good housing" as opposed to inadequate housing; the debate surrounding the notion of "need" in mass construction since the 1950s; and contemporary persistence of forms of inadequate housing. Vais (2022), in turn, addresses the term *systematization*, as it was used in Romania during the 20th century. The article investigates the sources of the term and the changes in its meaning and in the practice it named, in each phase of its evolution: from its emergence at the turn of the 20th century and its adoption as label for scientific urbanism during the interwar period, to its political instrumentalization and projection on large scales in spatial planning during the late socialist period, and its rejection in the post-socialist years. Lameira et al. (2022) study the term *affordable* as associated with the scientific, theoretical, institutional, and academic discourse on residential architecture in Portugal over the last 100 years. Investigating other terms linked with

affordable housing, such as "económica" (economical), "pobre" (poor), and more recently "custos controlados" (controlled costs/low-cost), this article encompasses the shifts in the meaning of the term "affordable" and broadens the contemporary discussion of the housing problem in relation to the type of property and target audience.

Several contributions to this issue analyze culturally-specific and situated terms, concepts, and notions, and consider them in relation to their understanding in the housing discourse and practice. They provide a new insight on urban and planning cultures, forms, and policies over the 20th century. Schwake (2022) explores the changing terms used to define *frontier settlement* in the Israel–Palestine context since the 1920s, indicating the ways in which terminological changes, from "homes" to "assets" and from "pioneers" to "stakeholders," mask an inherently consistent process of frontier settlement. Rousset (2022) studies the politics of localism in German architecture and planning by examining the ideal of the "small house" (*Kleinhaus*) as an antidote to the substandard tenement apartment in housing debates in Germany prior to WWI. Dragutinovic et al. (2022) identify the concepts of *self-management* and social ownership of housing in the post-WWII period in Yugoslavia as an important legacy of Yugoslav urban planning and housing policies, emphasizing their potentiality for rearticulating the dialogue between public and private, engaging citizens in decision-making and co-creation of the urban reality. Ben-Asher Gitler (2022) explores *mixed-use housing* of the post-WWII period as an experiment that articulated urban hierarchies by integrating elements belonging to the different scales of the city into housing plans. She analyzes the terminological frameworks proposed by Team 10 in Europe and Denise Scott Brown and Harvey Perloff in the US, tracing how these evolved into groundbreaking designs that redefined the architecture of mixed-use housing. Coricelli (2022) studies the co-'s of *co-living* and distinguishes between co-housing, based on bottom-up initiative of dwellers subscribing to a contract of cohabitation, and co-living communities generated exclusively through economic accessibility. Explicitly targeting the urban middle-classes willing to live simultaneously together and apart, the co- involves collective-living, convenient-living, and community-living. Izar (2022) explores the meanings of *self-building* as the prevalent mode of urban production in the fast-paced urbanization in African cities and regions, by studying incrementality, emplacement, and erasure in Dar es Salaam's traditional Swahili neighborhoods. Self-building as long-term urban production modes represents a form of popular urbanization characterized by long temporalities, which simultaneously facilitate and are facilitated by affordable and incremental forms and processes of home building.

Looking at the lexicon used to discuss dwelling, other articles examine the multiple origins and changing meanings of the terms, when shared by diverse fields (normative, political, planning, administrative, financial)

or migrating across countries, disciplines, and cultures. Sometimes crystallized or re-invented through images produced to advance specific spatial or social meanings, this lexicon brings together diverging local and global realms, acquiring an international dimension with diverse implications at local level. Pacheco (2022) studies the role of the post-war transnational consultant Otto Koenigsberger in housing and planning development. The article traces overlooked knowledge channels outside of mainstream geopolitical frameworks that decolonize architectural education, and examines the notion of *generalist* in redefining both the profession and the professional involved in housing research and design. De Vos and Spoomans (2022) study the evolving vocabulary used for *collective housing* in Belgium and the Netherlands, as local traditions and contemporary policy place collective dwelling again on the agenda of architecture and planning. Allweil and Zemer (2022) examine the confluence of New Brutalist architecture and the consolidation of market-produced middle-class housing estates. The article looks at a large, Team 10 inspired estate in Tel Aviv as an arena for exploring the architectural ethics enabling the persistence of a *middle-class community*. Caramellino (2022) addresses the radical reconceptualization of the notion of *neighborhood* as advanced by American architects during WWII in response to the new political, cultural, and economic conditions of the war, reconfiguring the organizational principle of the “neighborhood unit,” and transferring the discourse from the domain of urban sociology and technical planning to the realm of the American profession.

Built on a heterogeneous corpus of terms, the articles in this thematic issue, with their diverse aims and angles, contribute to the development of a new outlook on the current housing crisis and the role of architecture in it. This collection of terms defines a theoretical framework to investigate housing as architecture, and explore architecture’s capacity to envision a post-neoliberal society.

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About the Authors



Yael Allweil (PhD) is associate professor in the Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning, Technion, Israel, where she heads the “HousingLab: History and Future of Living” research group. She completed her PhD in architecture history at UC Berkeley. Her research has been published in the monograph *Homeland: Zionism as Housing Regime 1860–2011* (Routledge, 2017) and in journal articles for *Urban Studies*, *ACME*, *City*, *Urban Planning*, and others. Her research was funded by the Fulbright Foundation, Graham Foundation, Israel Science Foundation, and Israel Institute for Advanced Studies. She is an elected member of the Israel Young Academy of Science.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Gaia Caramellino (PhD) is assistant professor in architecture history at the Politecnico di Milano. Her research focuses on the history of housing policies, discourses, and practices and the transfer of knowledge in architecture and urban design. Her work was funded by the Graham Foundation, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Rockefeller Foundation, and Israel Institute for Advanced Studies. She was visiting fellow at the CCA, Montreal, in 2011. Recent book publications include *Europe Meets America: William Lescaze, Architect of Modern Housing* (2016), *The Housing Project* (2020, with S. Dadour), and *Post-War Middle-Class Housing* (2015, with F. Zanfi).