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**Instructor Information:**

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**New Spaces of Housing**

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This seminar will offer a study of the history and current state of public housing in the United States. The seminar will seek to outline a scope and future for public housing with analysis of how it was conceived and how it is both designed, financed and managed as a public project.

**How do architects discuss and take part in the design and development of housing today?**

**Abstract: The Rise of an *Anti - Policy* in Housing and its effects on Design and Cost of Housing**

This studio discussion will focus design and affordable housing in the United States: the goal is to examine how architecture and housing policy have interacted under the broad rubric of design and policy but more specifically how changes in housing policy have been often been assumed to have decreased role direct federal expenditures play in lower-income and public housing development in the United States since the advent in the 1980's of low-income housing tax credits (LIHTC) and other tax based incentives for housing development. The research topics will address how changes in funding mechanisms have affected not only the development and design of lower-income and public housing, but also how they these changes in means have been perceived and what impact they had on the engagement of planning and architecture practices with issues of poverty and low-income housing.

With a focus on parallel evolutions in architectural design and theory since the 1980's that has often seemed to abandon housing as a zone of experimentation the seminar will explore how planning and architectural education could do far more to produce a counter to the status quo in all forms of housing production. The goal is re-connect Architecture and Planning capabilities within a discussion of the financial practices as well the political philosophies of these shifts—more accurately within the seeming loss of an ability to critically discuss equity issues that many of the tax incentive practices often seem to dissimulate into market development models. Affordable housing as a derivative of tax credits, multi-tiered funding sources, and an architectural guise of *“fitting in” with the quasi-vernacular* of broader status quo developer housing models (and its constituency) has increasingly made it difficult to discuss the deeper meaning of both the political underpinnings of these policy shifts but also the potential of architectural and planning practices to affect the outcome—to enter the debate.

U.S. housing policy increasingly moved toward less reliance on direct subsidy of low-income and poverty rental housing during the 1990's, but the actual means to achieve this shift were created in the 1980's with the emergence of Low Income Housing Tax Credits, and other incentive means offered in lieu of direct government subsidy for housing. In 1998 the *Quality Work and Housing Responsibility Act (QWHRA)* employed directly spatial language in seeking to “de-concentrate” poverty in Public Housing Authority Developments where the homogeneity of constituencies and certain risk factors was deemed too high. These financial and overtly spatial mechanisms—*moving monies and bodies*—require far more attention then they have had in the public realm, but also within the architectural and planning academic and design realms.

**How do architects discuss housing today?**

Since 2008 and the collapse of credit markets in the United States, the term housing has become a metaphor and symbol for the country's economic crisis. Without intention it also revived a long held but under scrutinized fact that architects and planners had long ago lost any significant claim on the design of housing in the U.S. Yet in this equation new forms of housing—design, what an architect or planner can contribute—are now more urgently needed than they have been in 60 years.

The issues today are vivid yet still barely explored: credit default swaps, collateralized debt obligations, sub-prime mortgages, securitization, the Community Reinvestment Act...the list of financial practices, instruments, policy goals, is long, and increasingly the terms are made real in the realm of mass media, in ways that no one could have predicted possible, yet the slow and steady loss of architectural or planning roles in housing has been underway for decades. You could say architects have little to nothing to do with the current housing crisis and thus absolve or indict the profession. In the United States architects have very little to do with housing, and its urban form is often more a product of large scale zoning than any form of social or land use planning. Speculative housing development barely involves architects, engineers or planners and the wealth produced from housing development cordoned off the need for innovation.

Not all housing escapes analysis in the academic realm however: public housing and its evolution into various forms of subsidized or incentivized housing since the 1980's have been afforded an architectural form in New Urbanism. The issues are pivotal but to a large degree the actual depth of the social and political underpinning in public housing have been subtended to a debate about historical forms of style. Masking the larger issues of how public housing has morphed into quasi-market housing and how modern concrete housing blocks common in early public housing have taken on a market guise of wood frame and stucco —of low rise pseudo vernacular. Architecture has either inflamed a debate about authenticity (about design and construction, etc.) or moved public housing closer to suburban housing where architecture has long ceased to be seen as a key denominator. In this light one could say that later forms of both historical or neo-vernacular post modernism (New Urbanism generalized appearance) not only overly simplified the issues of mass housing and state or market controls but thwarted a wider discussion of what housing could have become and how its financial and economic aspects could relate to concepts of *other* architectural quality or theory. Architecture has either been removed from the scene entirely—as in the suburban sprawl of the past 40 years—or been used to disguise and mask a tremendous shift in how commoditized housing became. In relation to public housing New Urbanism in many ways cloaked the shift in which housing for the poor and lower-income groups slowly became a market produced incentivized commodity. In doing so it also failed often to release the genius of the markets for innovation; why did housing become retro when under the rafts of market incentives offered to low income housing since the 1980's when phones, cars or even tires become innovative and new with more market pressures (and immense government investment in their infrastructures).

Where in this maelstrom would you re-engage what an architect can offer, or a planner and how would you begin to both outline the change that has happened (while we were away) but also how one could begin to take part in the liquidity and ephemeral nature of markets and the financial practices that have been beneath not just the housing crisis but beneath the wider forces of globalization and neo-liberalized economies. Schools of architecture know these issues well but seem to apply to them to more specialized programs—museums, transit depots, and other unique components in the urban lexicon that seem to be captivating to designer because they are seen as levers on the larger social world—housing studios persist but as core studios, or as a requisite aspect of a curriculum.

At the time of its design and construction *The Berlin Free University* by the architects Candilis-Josic-Woods did not overtly reveal the vulnerability or doubt that the architects were facing about the scale and social ambition of their work. In the mid 1960's as the housing project at Toulouse le Mirail was under construction—halfway completed—Candilis expressed his doubts about how long the development for 20,000 people was taking and how centralized the control over its design was. Faced with criticism from both within and without the Team X group there was a sense that the work of the group's work was being realized with too much top down control. Realized by state organizations and of a scale that was often immense the project at Toulouse could be re-cast as counter to the ideals of the emergent and self-organizing social life that the architects imagined. In 1968 Aldo Van Eyck, an important member of Team X, and architect and professor at Delft University, was called a "lackey of capitalism" by student: Toulouse-Le Mirail was ten years into its design and execution: it now served 20,000 people—and according to Candilis could now be examined to gauge how this experience had turned out and how their relationship to the political environment was effecting the work and people's lives. The histories of Team X are often re-analyzed, especially in the realm of housing, but the more private histories of how the architects saw their own work

as it emerged reveals a self imposed critique of scale, and especially control that pre-seeded later forms of post-modernism or renewed forms of existentialism: critical forces that dominated the intellectual milieu of schools in the 70's and 80's and that constructed how an architect viewed their own forms of control but also their engagement and ability to alter the forms of power that shaped their work.

Today, its possible to claim a new generation has eagerly sought new modes of engagement with finance, with power in the widest sense, in part because we use computation to abet a more responsive and emergent means to work in immense scales while not demonstrating a top down form of control. That is architects seems to have come full circle in having recoiled from immense works and the social aspects of their scale but have returned to this arena again in part knowing we have no choice. Housing in this light is poised to be renewed as an academic and professional project and its future financial security—its securitization—requires that it be new because the older forms are not stable enough to sustain investment. At least not sound investment.

The need to bridge architectural design and economics is clear, and in many areas of architectural design is has begun anew: from performance based construction protocols (BIM, etc.), to environmental criteria and calibration, to a far more open engagement with forms of production in building materials and industry, a generation has seen economics and finance as essentially non-adversarial but housing has a far more intricate history when it comes to money and more precisely when it comes to the kinds of territory that housing is expected to cohere. If the financial crash of 08 caused a reflexive re-examination of mortgage markets it also has deeply shaken a belief in the validity of the suburban housing model—its not clear how much faith the markets will place in this model in the near or long term future (as markets stabilize), but that more careful mind would surely see this moment as one that forces a conclusion: the housing we have built will not sustain or bear the same level of investment that it did prior to the crash and as such we are facing both a redesign of housing in architectural terms as well as financial terms.

The time is right for tremendous change in the urban and housing landscape: banks need innovation in this sector as much as architects and planners. This has been a very slow arrival at an immediately declared crisis but architects first seem to need to trace our footsteps, re-construct the minefield that we set for ourselves? As Candilis surveyed his half done mega project, Van Eyck was facing what was perhaps a generational criticism of having become a part of the establishment; yet it seems we have over-reacted this past 40 years and abdicated a massive swath of the American architectural and urban terrain. We have criticized the suburbs, criticized and then embraced its kitsch and iconography, avoided it altogether and tried to assuage it with dignified design, but we have done very little to actually examine or explore the monetary or financial engines of its making. Doing so could turn architecture into a derivative of money perhaps; but it could also allow a projection of a new world that those that control money cannot sketch yet alone see. Banks need architecture; we need a new place to live, but we also need something against which to loan money.

Coda:

Between 1996 and 2001, as U.S. public housing increasingly moved toward less reliance on direct subsidy of low-income and poverty housing, more than fifty-one thousand public housing units were razed or converted. Most of this transformation—directed to a nationwide network of U.S. Housing Authority sites was done through a program based within the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The program is now central and well known, and its architecture, New Urbanism, is now 15 years old. What has simply become known, as HOPE VI housing was not only radical in what it signified but also decidedly non-radical in architectural appearance and rhetoric. It seemed architecturally conventional but the shift it carried was indeed immense: If HOPE VI housing usually appears to fit in its outward appearance or its guise of vernacular styling, it nonetheless represented a dramatic shift from the housing policies that preceded it. Federal housing policy from the 1930's; the 1950's and even the 1970's entered an era of tax based incentives, smaller scale construction and quasi-private development models. While earlier eras of public housing took shape amid the formal principles of modern housing, and modern urban planning, they also were funded in centralized ways: bonds issued by the federal government and paid for by rental roles or outright grants and other direct expenditures were forms of top down funding and central organizations of Public Housing until the 1980's and emergence of Low Income Housing Tax Credits and other tax based incentives for the private development of low income housing. New Urbanism gave this transformation a visual image and one could say diminished the declaration of the change at hand in the government's programs.

The radical aspect of the government shift was on one hand an attempt to decentralize and break down the monolithic aspect of housing development for the poor—on the surface it is a drive towards heterogeneity or diversity in public housing and was crucial—and needed. But the devices to move this housing towards market principles not only created new waves of displacement (HOPE VI reduced PHA unit counts); it also dismantled or orphaned the tenets of how or why a government should directly care for the poor. Low income and poverty housing would henceforth exist an adjunct of market housing and a quasi dependent on successful participant forms of high-end capitalism. The more New Urbanism confirmed this by adapting to the market means of construction it seems that even an appraisal of its successes became difficult to mount because with this simulation of the status quo it seemed the grounds for making new claims were relinquished. Aside from the ethical questions about fairness, poverty, access to decent housing, discrimination one also loses access to the more the role of the entrepreneurial markets. Tax credits (low income housing tax credits) were intended to incentivize wealthy companies to fund the shift from top down public housing to distributed new forms of smaller scale and heterogeneous public housing but this shift seems to have stalled. The valoristic aspects of architectural theory and education tie into this and yet today it seems urgent to claim that we are now facing a moment when almost all systems have failed. Banking instruments and practices may be to blame—the list goes on—but what is clear is that new architecture and urban planning can again take a lead. Tracing the footsteps from Cadilis’ doubt to Manfredo Tafuri’s desperation to New Urbanisms assuredness...it is all necessary but we are essentially not seated at the table where decisions are made and at this time we might quietly but confidently take the lead in the conversation.

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