

Columbia University in the City of New York
Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation
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New Spaces of Housing:

From Central Planning to Distributed Incentives /
Housing, Space, Policy and Finance

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Seminar Abstract:

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

This seminar will explore the 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 seminar lectures will address how changes in funding mechanisms have affected not only the development and design of lower-income and public housing, but also how 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 educations 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.

Decentralization

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 than they have had in the public realm, but also within the architectural and planning academic and design realms.

The shifts toward decentralization of funding sources that have characterized U.S. housing policy since the 1990's have been paralleled by quite literal formal changes in architectural and urban design. However, the tendency to see these political shifts in light of building form or urban planning design has limited the analysis, and wider conversation about the pitfalls and broader opportunities or implications at the core of these economic and ultimately social shifts. While housing design has long ceased to be a central focus of architectural theory or design in United States architectural schools, it is in fact embedded within, and emblematic of, the same economic and urban conditions against which much contemporary architectural theory and design has defined (even steered) itself. That is, housing is precisely located within the same theories of territory, of the metropolis, of the over-arching influence of finance on urban life and subjectivity that have motivated the most experimental practices in design. Architectural postures of negation or engagement have recently been deeply affected by new forms of Building Information Management (BIM) and by capabilities to engage construction and managed forms of money and material in ways that are essentially financial models. How these new capabilities in architectural practice relate to managed practices

money and finance and how architects have seemingly increased their willingness to view the potentials of financial practices more positively is but one shift that has already begun to alter and confuse the overall state of housing design and planning.

Our goal is reexamine housing within the parameters of architecture and planning practices by asking both disciplines to address how design, policy and development practices have evolved since the 1980's and in particular how they can be expected to engage lower-income constituencies. The questions will be posed against a divide that has often left both practices falsely at odds with each other and more so at odds with false adversaries: a tendency to see [architecture + abstraction] vs. [planning + economics] has in recent years been dramatically altered by a wider predomination of market logics as the denominator of urban space and of social life, but also of architectural design. Within the over-arching market aspects of housing design both fields have lost footing while seeming to also fail to see the potentials or how the shifts were instigated—on what grounds. While both fields rely on constituent equity concepts, spatial and territorial logics, broad and specific conceptions of urban subjectivity, they do little to directly engage the literal mechanisms of the market or to dissect the principles of finance and liquidity that are at the heart of the housing policy today.

Seminar Requirements

Each seminar member will be required to: participate in class discussions; make an in class case-study presentation; and write a final paper that critically analyzes a specific housing policy or program and proposes revisions to that policy or program that would lead to a more desirable result moving forward. The seminar will address more specific aspects of how programs such as HOPE VI or The Quality Work and Housing Responsibility Act affected housing design but you will be asked to add both specificity and interpretation to how changes in the relationships between policy, finance and design affected the role planners and architects play in housing design.

Week 1

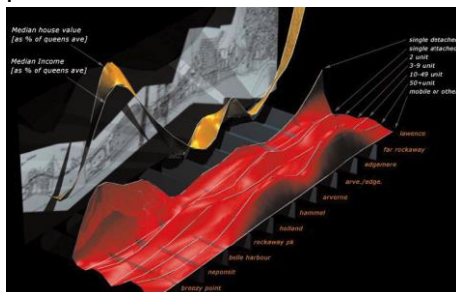
Techniques, Power and Territory

Architecture Loses and then Seeks to Re-Gain its Agency

At most American universities Planning and Architecture have been considered to be unique and separate concerns; divisions pointed to a role for planning as based in policy, while the role for architecture has been based in design. Yet at most schools today architectural design studios frequently engage in planning, and in fact often make attempts to analyze policy, and to map or diagram urban configurations. There has been a tremendous shift in how architects imagine their relationship to large-scale work, and a host of new terms have been initiated in the last 20 years to lend agency to architects who do want to engage in work at the urban level. Yet architects rarely use the literal empirical methods of planners—or perform more the calibrated work in demographics or research that planner use. They do however, find themselves using new means in representation to visualize, and to examine urban space, urban demographics—systems of urban formation that have literal as well as less than overtly physical manifestations are increasingly made pliant and legible in architectural analysis. G.I.S. allow a mapping of income levels, commuting times, race, income—these reveal themselves quite easily—but it's the comparative work that lends insight and reveals subtle shapes, surfaces of urban life that are both immense and infrastructural—technological; yet also, intimate and tremendously private.

Planners are trained in the historical trends of architecture but have little formal contact with design pedagogy, despite planning discipline's presence in architecture programs. Increasingly, architectural design is a service commodity that is purchased like other elements of the development industry such as engineering, surveying and legal representation. In development, the role of the architect is subordinate to zoning regulations, financing rules and life cycle limitations.

A new generation of young architects has been assembling new means of urban analysis, as well as new means of visualization, as well as fabrication techniques to conceive, and to convince a wider public of what is possible and indeed what is seen as imperative. The scale of questions asked, projects conceived, and social /political engagement is tremendously magnified even as our work and those it affects become more immediate and often personal. This has allowed and instigated a re-entry into questions whose scale is immense, yet that we imagine we can address with intimacy and new agency.



Above: Diagrams reveal relationships between densities of public housing, income, race and housing type on the Far Rockaway Peninsula. Arverne and Edgemere housing is generally 50 or more units per building. Income in this area is approximately 22% of Queens's median income. At the western end of the peninsula wealthy areas such as Neponset and Belle Harbor are predominantly Caucasian; dwelling types are almost exclusively single-family houses and the income per household is approximately 220% of Queens' median income.

Week 2

United States Public Housing and Banking Reform: 1934

The Wagner-Steagall Act / the Glass-Steagall Act

The United States Housing Act of 1937—funded by the Wagner Steagal Act of 1934—allocated 800,000,000 dollars in the form of federal loans to states to develop low-income housing. In New York the prospect of 300,000,000 dollars in new federally provided funds loomed and the (then) recently formed New York Housing Authority became an epicenter of urban development and design. Public housing became a major “new source—perhaps the great new source— of outside money” (Robert A.M. Stern) flowing into New York and whether one was interested in housing or not, the revenue stream was to become a major force of urban, political and social change.

The shape these funds would take was to become a matter of architecture and planning; for the next thirty-four years housing would be a central focus of urban expenditure and urban policy. Indeed, the design of federally funded housing was to a large degree the design of the city itself. The implications of housing planning, financing and ultimately its architectural design have been at the root of issues that range from the construction of class and race divisions to mental health and social strife. Housing policies and architectural design have instigated major changes in zoning and building massing, and have been at times the most poignant testing grounds for design ideas that began in the realm of the avant-garde and found themselves constructed in the very real situation of poverty, segregation and race relations. Housing prototypes by Le Corbusier's (*The City of Tomorrow*) published a decade earlier in 1924, became instrumental tools for "slum clearance;" in the early years of the New York Housing Authority tens of thousands of tenements were destroyed with the goal of "un-slumming" the city. Then chairman of the Housing Authority, Edmond Borgia Butler, directly linked housing development with social and political change in claiming that "to justify further public housing, it is necessary to base public housing, on something more secure than improvement of the physical condition of the city, by substituting new bricks, mortar and steel for old."

Fast Forward: Between 1996 and 2001, more than fifty-one thousand federal public housing units were razed or converted to quasi-traditional forms of market rate ownership housing. Most of this literal transformation-directed to a national network of U.S. Housing Authority sites-was done through the HUD, and in particular under the HOPE VI program, but the wider profile of this shift paints housing policy as increasingly being realized within market practices, and it increasingly signaled that lower-income and poverty constituencies in the United States urban centers, would increasingly compete for resources within the markets.

In the United States, low-income and poverty housing, initiated under the New Deal never found ready public acceptance -and the transformation of these provisions in some sense does not surprise. The scope and speed of this transformation does however instigate a critical set of questions, and in particular suggests that it would be advantageous for U.S. housing to now be understood as parallel to conditions in emerging economies worldwide; that is, as similar to situations where the safety net of public or state assistance is also not available, and indeed has never been available, to constituencies that are struggling in the face of demanding and surging market forces. The seminar will rely on student research and outside advisors to examine how low income and poverty housing initiatives could expand their leverage and their legitimacy by identifying and responding to housing needs in preventative ways.

"Public housing must not be used to regiment the tenants...poverty is not the sin of the poor; it is the sin of society," claimed Butler.



Ludwig Hilberseimer, "Une ville verticale", perspective d'une rue est-ouest, 1924.

The formal and spatial models assumed by Public Housing never have been fully reconciled with the U.S. based political or racial aspects of Public Housing, yet neither has Public Housing ever been a consistent entity — Public Housing in the U.S. has evolved dramatically in terms of its policy and financial means.

Week 3

Central Planning and Architectural Design Find Form

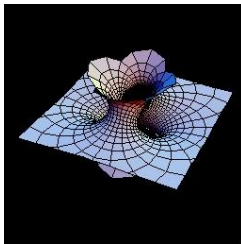
A New Topology of Wealth and Poverty / The Loss of Plastic Space

In a scenario offered in 1993 Noam Chomsky makes a distinction between the geographical United States and American corporations. The country he wrote is "developing characteristics of the third world"— but he speculated that its corporate share of worldwide production was probably increasing. According to Chomsky,

capital generated within an evolving global economy is no longer distributed in centripetal and centrifugal urban patterns, or in relation to knowable geographic origins. In places like New York and other large U.S. cities the private and public shapes of the city and its economy have not only lost their territorial relation to an origin, but have left their inhabitants without a collective imagination of power's origin; according to Chomsky the forecast prefigures a two-tiered society—“islands of wealth for investors and milieus of despair for the “restless many.” How does a planner or architect address the demographics of wealth and poverty today or address the place/space of lower income and poverty conditions.



Architectural Topologies: A Case Study: Bye House and Diamond Houses by John Hejduk.



Hofmann Genus – 3



The Ribbon Window and the End of the Interior: Le Corbusier, Villa Savoy

Week 4

The emergence of a bipolar approach in the federal government towards the provision of housing

The architectural precedents and political underpinnings to early public housing; post-war suburbanization and the introduction of the American Dream.

Week 5

The Reality and The Media Spectacle of THE CITY in Crisis

The Objectification of Public Housing; of the City

Public Housing has at time been seen as synonymous with urban decay, social disorder and limited personal initiative. It is widely perceived as a failed social policy magnified by its prevailing large scale, super-block and towers-in-the- park design aesthetic. Public housing is generally viewed as housing as last resort, overwhelmingly segregated by race. There are approximately 1.3 million households living in public housing units, managed by some 3,300 public housing authorities ("PHAs"). Public housing is home to approximately 2,082,000 people in the United States. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) administers Federal aid to local housing agencies that manage the housing for low-income residents at rents not exceeding 30% of their income. Housing authorities are creatures of state government that are governed locally by boards of commissioners, generally appointed by the chief elected official of the municipality or county.

A New Found Fear of Objectification: Observing the Poor.

“Traditionally, power was what was seen, what was shown, and what was manifested and, paradoxically, found the principle of its force in the movement by which it deployed that force. Those on whom [power] was exercised could remain in the shade; they received the light only from that portion of power that was conceded to them, or from the reflection of it that for a moment they carried. Disciplinary power, on the other

hand is exercised through invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline, it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them. It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection. And the examination is the technique by which power, instead of emitting the signs of its potency, instead of imposing its mark on its subjects, holds them in a mechanism of objectification. In this space of domination, disciplinary power manifests its potency, essentially by arranging objects. The examination is, as it were, the ceremony of this objectification.” Michel Foucault



Right: The Baruch Houses: Avenue D, NYC. / Left: Behind Glass: At the New York News Museum a Pulitzer Prize winning photograph shows children on the terrain vague of a housing project plaza. Glass camera lenses, television screens and windows on poverty frame a view but fail to show the policy.

Week 6

The Rise and Fall of the Right to Housing

Modernism's role in public housing and the unfortunate separation from its social agenda; the rise of local housing authorities; and reimagining the “right” to housing and the role of the federal government in its provision through the civil rights movement.

Week 7

Guest Lecturer: Eric Belsky & Frances Piven - The Myth of Meritocracy

Homeownership and the Foreclosure Crisis

Provision of Housing as Economic Stimulus and Liability

Through the eight years of the Bush Administration, the focus of HUD shifted away from the provision of traditional public housing and dramatically towards the role of promoting homeownership. Coupled with lending practices in the banking industry that were grossly irresponsible at best, and in many cases criminal, these policies contributed significantly to the foreclosure crisis. The collapse of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, along with the bail out of the banking industry, the Federal Government never seemed more directly involved in the housing industry yet rarely has it tried harder to give the impression that the housing market remains unfettered and minimally subsidized. Is all housing now public? And yet housing for those in the greatest need have fewer options than any time since the 1930's.

Arguably tasked with “cleaning up this mess”, the Obama Administration introduces the Neighborhood Stabilization Program as a precursor to, and then as a component of, the American Reinvestment & Recovery Act (ARRA) in an attempt to keep the housing market in certain portions of the American landscape from spiraling out of control. In what amounted to legislation that sought to stop the bleeding, the problem of an overly inflated housing market filled with overly inflated houses was in fact stabilized and all of the contributing factors left intact if not emboldened. The call by many for the Obama Administration to allow for a market correction was largely ignored as was any attempt to rethink the Federal Government's role in the housing market.

What role does homeownership play in our economy and how that could have been re-imagined or recalibrated as a tool to provide all segments of the population with adequate shelter. Should homeownership have been isolated from financial investment so as to prevent large segments of the population from the prospects of losing both?

Week 8
Student Presentations
Preliminary

Week 9
Spring Break

Week 10
The Growth of the Community Development Corporations:
The CDC and Community Reinvestment Act

Week 11
HOPE VI
The Overly Simplified Renovation, Re-Development (and Reduction) of Public Housing

Between 1996 and 2001, as U.S. housing policy 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 titled HOPE VI. HOPE VI supplies funding to demolish “distressed” public housing units, and is intended also to create a greater demographic mix in public housing blocks.

While income is a standard denominator used to reveal the social demographic, any number of other variables such as race or family make up were also used. HOPE IV has been understood as both a boost to public housing—it does fund renovation—but also as a force that at its core diminishes the number of public housing units available. The program is now more than fifteen years old, and its ramifications while clearly visible are also far from understood: it is only beginning.



Gallaratese, Aldo Rossi 1969, Milan
New Urbanism was not alone in its fascination with the past—how as the image or memory of history been allocated as a straw man in the neo-marketization of lower income and affordable housing? What is the potential of re-reading Aldo Rossi against the ubiquitous presence of market logics today in urban life—in suburban life?

Week 12
The Tilt to the Right
Does Federalist Money equate with Federalist Houses?

Affordable housing in the United States is almost inevitably developed as a public/private partnership in which the private market demands on housing construction are ameliorated or compensated for by public investment and subsidy in the form of tax credits and bond financing. A tax credit is a form of subsidy that is granted to a developer/builder who commits to providing affordable housing—the credit’s value is then sold to a corporation who in effect provides the equity that funds construction. The tax credit maintains the semblance of a free-market by providing public financing incentives—tax funds—that bridge the gap between market rate housing and lower income families. The disparity between market rate and a

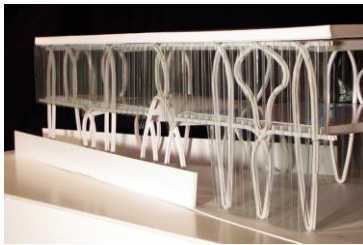
subsidized market might otherwise cause re-distributions of population by income, race, class, gender or other factors. These financing initiatives often state their goals as those of re-building disinvested territory in a way that market forces are presumed to be unable to.

What other architectural options other than the New Urbanist prototype existed that also could have been applied to these conditions—that is, what other forms of architecture were not able to find ready inclusion with these policy changes.

Flow

On the cusp of the 19th century Thomas Jefferson, Madison, Locke and de Tocqville all countered attempts at a legislated redistribution of monolithic forms of wealth, even, as they recognized the free-market rights to private property sustained a dangerous potential to damage equality in the pooling of wealth. In a society that protected the rights to property and potentially exploitive monetary gain it portends, Federalist law nonetheless protected the individual right to gains made in a free-market even if those gains often seemed intolerable in light of losses suffered by the apparently less industrious. This seminar is situated directly at the nexus of federal policy that during the 1980's and 90's redirected how the government would address the issue of poverty and housing in the United States. The changes in federal policy amounted to nothing less than a major shift in how the government would seek to address the problem of housing the poor—a problem that since 1935 it had aggressively addressed in the centralized control and management of scores of rental apartment units and histories of slum clearing. In 1998, the federal government was focused on returning housing to the market and in removing the government from the role of landlord or developer. The federal government was adopting a conservative view to housing development and was declining its former role as landlord and developer for housing for the poor.

Case Studies: New forms of Architecture and concepts of flow time and change



New Forms of Architectural Flow: Greg Lynn Form: Slavin House, Venice, CA. 2005
Lynn's work on calculus and surface and spline offers a spatial imagination that would coincide with other forms of flow —monetary and financial practices.



Engineered Constituencies: Policy, Flow and Change:

NYCHA, Prospect Plaza Redevelopment, Brooklyn, NY 2005
HOPE VI redevelopment altered the makeup of social constituencies in literal and demographic structure.

Week 13

Looking Forward

Can we make a new case for Public Housing in an increasingly privatized housing market?

As the role of the Federal Government in the provision of affordable housing continues to diminish, there is an increase in attempts both in the profit and not-for-profit sectors of the housing market to provide for the needs of the lower income tiers of our neighborhoods and communities. The rise of groups like Habitat for Humanity and Architecture for Humanity, along with the continued success of Community Development Corporations in many cities and the investment of companies like Google in syndicated Low Income Housing Tax Credit suggest that the housing needs of those portions of our society that are the most in need can be met without traditional public housing.

But do these vehicles rely too much on good will and/or profitability? Do they do an adequate job of providing for the lowest-common-denominator or are these sectors of the housing market just geared at a reinterpretation of the “worthy poor”. As long as housing needs are left to the market, can housing ever become part of the infrastructure, with connections to education, transportation and other facets of the economy that are often not profitable, as necessary for a truly sustainable community.

Can a role for public housing be re-imagined, re-invigorated? Does it turn away from the private sector? Does it remove itself from the fluctuations of the housing market? Does it focus on the lowest-common-denominator? Does it re-imagine a role of transitional housing?

CHOICE, RAD, and PNA's: Streamlining HUD and Redefining the Role of Housing + Life After HOPE VI / CHOICE, RAD and PNA's / Streamlining HUD and Redefining the Role of Housing

After nearly two decades of HOPE VI projects and a robust Low Income Housing Tax Credit / Affordable Housing industry poised to continue on its own, and numerous attempts by the Bush Administration to abolish the program, Congress and the Obama Administration begin to pull away from HOPE VI and the controversy that surrounded it. In its place the Obama Administration, with Shaun Donovan as the HUD Secretary, introduced a number of initiatives designed to minimize the Federal Government's Role in the management, if not the provision, of affordable housing. The CHOICE Neighborhoods Initiative is incredibly broad in scope and seeks to integrate a number of Federal Agencies in the transformation of larger segments of cities focusing on the premise that one's zip code is the largest single determinant in one's “lot in life”. But does this policy run the risk of taking on too much or accepting responsibility for too little. Other programs launched simultaneously, including mandatory Physical Needs Assessments (PNAs) and the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) Program – which can be simplified as a budget version of Section 8 Vouchers – suggest that HUD no longer wants to be in the business of real estate and would prefer to dissolve the entire portfolio into a large voucher system that relies heavily on the Private Housing Market. Simultaneously, HUD changes its mission statement to include the protection of private real estate based investments.

How does the possibility of an entirely voucher based public housing authority and federal intervention secured only through the leveraging of significant private investments effect the fabric of our cities?

Week 14

Guest Lecturers: Richard Baron & Deb Gross - Public Private Partnerships as Panacea

