

NEW SPACES OF HOUSING

CourseNo: ARCHA4678_001_2015_1

Meeting Time: R 11:00A-01:00P **Meeting Location:** BUELL HALL 300 S

Instructor Information:

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New Spaces of Housing is organized as a research seminar focused on the state of Public Housing and Affordable Housing in the United States. The seminar will also focus on current aspects of design and theory in architecture and build connections to work by a wide range of architects.

Research: The seminar will take on specific research areas and each seminar member will be asked to develop an expertise in one of these areas. The outline provided below is a sample of topics areas but not the course will develop other options and areas with member input.

Faculty Lectures: The faculty will offer lectures on historical and current issues in housing and how government's role in creating housing has been determined and enacted since the advent of Public Housing in the 1930's.

The seminar is open to all programs within GSAPP and is designed to allow a greater depth of knowledge in housing and public housing but also affordable housing.

Michael Bell and Brian Loughlin work in this area of design and development and together will offer guidance and help frame research. The seminar will also host at least one internal debate and presentation with guest speakers that is to be moderated by the faculty and students. In the previous academic year this included Eric Belsky, Director the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard and Daniel Solomon, Professor, University of California, Berkeley.

"We should concentrate our work, not only to a separated housing problem, but housing involved in our daily work and all the other functions of the city." Alvar Aalto

New Spaces of Housing

Housing provision and delivery is a complex combination of factors, forces, and fluxes - from people and policy, to economics and finance, to material and fabrication, to planning and design - that is seen as one of the largest drivers in our economy. At few moments in the last 50 years has the provision of housing in our country been at a greater point of contrast: simultaneously profits from mortgages and real estate investment are at near-record highs and public subsidies are at all-time lows; technological advances are fabrication efficiencies should be driving the cost of construction lower, yet housing costs as a percentage of household income are the highest they have ever been; for a majority of Americans their home is their single largest asset and frequently their only investment, meanwhile after the bubble burst more than half of the households in America could not afford the house they lived in. Through various fields of research related to housing and methodologies that allow us to better understand the spatial and temporal components of these various factors, forces, and fluxes — both individually, and as they relate to one another — we as architects, planners, developers, and designers hold a unique position from which not only can many of these elements be better understood, but by exploring, designing, and developing new modes, theories, and practices of housing provision, fabrication, and delivery we can begin to influence this landscape and create new spaces of housing at this pivotal moment.

Public Housing, Affordable Housing, Low-Income 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.

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 *steeled*) 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 logic 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 logic, 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.

Michael Bell, Sample work in Housing Design and Public Policy:

http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2012/foreclosed/temple_terrace

http://www.livestream.com/museummodernart/video?clipId=pla_6f45d72e-2990-40ae-bd57-b742f5c26d54&utm_source=slibrary&utm_medium=ui-thumb

<http://www.houstonpress.com/2000-11-09/news/not-your-standard-issue/full/>

Brian Loughlin Sample work in Housing Design and Public Policy:

<http://urbanomnibus.net/2014/06/hard-units-a-drive-through-jersey-city-with-brian-loughlin/>

Sample Research Abstracts

1 Public Housing: The transformation of public housing “hard units” under HOPE VI and the entrepreneurial aspects of how housing agencies trade, acquire and renovate housing stock has changed in the past two decades and in particular since the Clinton Administration. Smaller agencies such as the Missoula Montana Housing Authority had sold its full housing stock and acquired existing apartment units/buildings to enable the use of Section 8 vouchers (and to expand the available apartment stock). The Bridgeport Housing Authority (CT) had been engaged in a long process of trading properties with the city to both decentralize and deconcentrate its public housing stock, but also to seek better land for development (for the city and the agency). Other case studies from El Paso to Jersey City are small but samples of a larger change in how public housing works. These examples point to a larger question that would be fruitful to research carefully: what is

the scope of change in this regard and how do the legal and financial mechanism that enable this operate? Most critically how do they reflect and impact the social and political goals of public housing today.

Case Studies: Missoula Housing Authority; Bridgeport Housing Authority, CT; El Paso Housing Authority; Jersey City, New Jersey.

2 Before HOPE VI: The advent of Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) initiated not just a change in the development means for affordable and/or public housing but also altered the literal mechanics of design and construction (the architecture). LIHTC established as part of the United States tax code in 1982 created a funding stream for housing by way of a revenue deferral—the federal government supplants direct expenditure on housing by way of tax credits.

LIHTC: Design is no longer idealized or administered by a public housing agency as owner, operator but instead by way of non-profit entities that correlate and administer funding streams that must satisfy multiple investment objective and criteria prior and perhaps more critically than housing itself. That is the 15 years annuity of the funds, the duration of regulatory compliance with HUD and other guidelines.

Cost: Affordable housing realized with LIHTC funds is often more expensive to realize than market rate or speculative housing due to the complexity and multiple funding streams. Soft costs are generally seen as higher and legal or management costs rise. Is there an effect on the product and its social goals? How is architecture and planning altered in this equation?

Syndication: With the IRS as a Housing Agency by way of Low-Income Housing Tax Credits what are the effects and trading practices of LIHTC and of syndication markets.

3 Mixed Income and the Agents of Change: Both the Quality Housing and Responsibility Act and HOPE VI have figured significantly in public housing in the past two decade. The results are overtly and directly spatial. QHWR had overtly spatial language—HOPE VI was overtly material in altering physical housing developments. Both at their outset were taken as a weakening of original public housing goals but they quickly (in architectural circles) were taken as cultural battles over architectural style. If taken what can be done to create more refined versions of spatial goals in how policy is written.

4 Voucher Programs in Housing Equity and Rent: in the 1990's and early 2000's development work in affordable housing focused on voucher programs designed to abet purchase and ownership of housing. Voucher programs as made available nationally but particularly in Houston were implemented to disaggregate larger sums of monies into funds in the form of household/vouchers. A household would receive a voucher to abet rent or ownership.

As an example: QHWR helped increase the reliance on voucher systems to provide equity or rent to low-income households. In relying on vouchers as a mode disaggregating large sums of federal monies in the form of assistance to individual households low-income and public housing was realized more in the manner of normative speculative housing. In short, it meant that the very mechanics and materiality of low-income housing changed but so to the professional engagement of architects—the normative building practices are less reliant on architects and our role is diminished dramatically. One could say that New Urbanism was abetted not by a shift in cultural taste but by a side effect of a political goal to disaggregate housing funding and its allocation—New Urbanism can be realized within the normative practices of construction that we use today in speculative housing. The example takes some unpacking but its offered to point to a way in which schools today could ideally find ways to be specific and precise in how they take on other fields (other forms of agency and power) and how we see their architectural consequence. With these histories now more historically understood what can we say of their scope and more so wider scale or economic footprint? Who did they help? Where?

5 Foreclosure: the New American Housing Landscape: In raw numbers the foreclosure crisis was and remains staggering. More than 15,000,000 homes entered foreclosure proceeding since 2007 with more than 5,000,000 having been repossessed (REO) or auction by lenders—this is approximately 11 times the number of hard unit public housing units built since 1937. Working with the **Museum of Modern Art** as well as within courses at Columbia the issues of foreclosure have been a subject of research and design by Columbia faculty but in the time since the MoMA “Foreclosed” workshops, exhibitions and conferences the overall stability of the housing markets has improved even as it is also a deeply uneven and varied “recovery.” The discrepancies are both regional and also based in who made the new investments—hedge funds according the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard account for as much as 25,000,000,000 dollars invested in foreclosed houses (more than 200,000 homes purchased by hedge funds). In other areas the recovery is driven by global investment and strong jobs bases. In short the housing recovery would seem to point to not only an uneven gain but also one that has dramatically different stabilities and futures. Aside from better understanding this condition it also is an important question to understand what it holds for opportunities. The issues are immediate in the form of single family houses and private lives but also structural and of a scale that is in effect a new form of mass-rental housing.

6 Globalization and the Transformation of United States Suburbs: How are suburbs faring in the era of increasing investment in major urban centers and the investment in housing/condominiums in major cities such as San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York? How is the affected by or altering what has been an evolving shift of poverty to the suburbs in the United States?

7 Municipal Structure and the Effects on Housing: Smaller municipalities that in effect provide the full spectrum of city services are a prevalent suburban model in the United States. What are the qualities and effects of municipal structure scale and size on housing conditions?

8 Climate Change and Energy Transformation: What are the effects of energy consciousness on public housing today? Or on affordable housing. Investigation should include a look at specifics of design or funding and change but also who is funding change where it does occur. A particular focus on "energy performance contracts" would be relevant as companies take on funding and then financially benefitting from new energy contracts.

9 State of American Housing: What are the current but also future concepts and tools that one would use to discuss United States housing today? Are there national barometers or tools that can sustain the scale of U.S. or his housing now more regional the ever. Collaboration with the Joint Center for Housing Studies, Harvard University

10 Affordability: the Lost Middle: Entire new modes of housing are needed for areas such as Silicon Valley where both normative housing issues such as affordability exist but within new extremes of wealth accumulation and also innovation. New forms of commuting (private company buses), new forms of networked communications and large scale change in state based funding for development. The middle today is a far from clear denominator and we see a dramatic shift from region to region as to what constitutes a middle class. Compare the terms middle class and poverty or middle class and rich in different areas of the country but in particular in areas where new economies are shifting the image of need and or stability.