

Uncertainties about housing and ways of living

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To cite this article: GATO, Maria Assunção – Uncertainties about housing and ways of living. **Estudo Prévio** 24. Lisboa: CEACTION/UAL - Centro de Estudos de Arquitectura, Cidade e Território da Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa, May 2024, p. 83-85. ISSN: 2182-4339 [Available at: www.estudoprévio.net]. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26619/2182-4339/24.3>

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Urbanisation and the accompanying intensification of economic extraction models, changes in family dynamics and social norms and widespread uncertainties surrounding housing, employment and lifestyle choices are global phenomena, particularly pronounced in several European countries. From the escalating costs associated with home ownership to the changing preferences of a diverse population, to the urgent need to adapt housing infrastructures to contemporary policrises, the housing field and ways of living is full of complexities and challenges. The recent disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic have further exposed critical issues, underlining the need for innovative solutions and responsive strategies. This thematic dossier delves into changes and uncertainties entwined with housing and ways of living in contemporary times. Inspired by a thematic panel convened during the 16th SIEF congress held in Brno, Czech Republic, in June 2023, the selection of articles herein sheds light on these evolving dynamics.

The inspirational article of Ana Rogojanu opens the dossier, presenting the case of Vienna, in Austria, which in the author 'words "is frequently cited as a leading example in addressing affordability challenges through a large social housing system". Titled "Persistent Structures of Public Housing in the Face of Changing Dwelling Practices: A Case Study of Vienna's Municipal Housing Stock", this article examines the intersection of affordability, access regulation, and normative settings within the built environment. It explores potential obstacles encountered by the most affordable segment of the housing market in adjusting to the evolving needs of lifestyles and household structures. With a housing stock system boasting 43% social housing, Vienna rightfully earns its acclaim as a robust model in housing studies. However, navigating the housing stock comes with

its own set of constraints and regulations for different social groups. Bridging the realms of housing studies and material culture studies, Ana Rogojanu's article underscores the imperative for Vienna's municipal housing to reassess dwelling layouts and allocation rules. This adaptation is crucial to accommodate the evolving dynamics of household arrangements, new family models, and the shared living preferences of young adults.

The second article is authored by Maria Moreno Carranco and confronts us with memories of the pandemic. "Gimme Shelter: the home during the COVID19 lockdown in Mexico City" is an autoethnographic exercise, which highlights the enormous challenges faced by young adults (university students) in managing their living spaces and adapting to their altered functionalities during the COVID-19 lockdown, in Mexico City. The selection of representative stories and testimonies, employing a blend of autobiographical and ethnographic approaches, not only how showcases dwellings serve as repositories of memories and deep significance but also highlights how necessary adaptations in domestic spaces impact and shape family interactions and individual lives. In the author's words, the purpose of this article is "(...) not just recounting tales of our homes and the impact of the pandemic in our everyday lives; rather, we're striving to understand the cultural dynamics at play within home environments in a particular moment in time, examining how both animate and inanimate elements contribute to the overall agency within these settings". Through the exercise of self-exposure by these students, inequalities and vulnerabilities that are normally not perceived in academic environments have also come to light, revealing the urgent need for improved housing conditions in Mexico City.

"Housing in Social Practices of The Religious Communities: Experience of Migration and Interaction in the (Sub)Urban Environment" is the title of the third article, authored by Nadežda Pazuhina. Focusing on housing practices within contemporary Latvian religious communities, particularly in Riga, this article bridges policy considerations with social and religious dimensions to explore housing as both a physical and mental sanctuary within the context of neighbourhood social spaces. It delves into the tactics of appropriation that shape specific trajectories of social interaction within individual communities or between different groups, particularly highlighting the dynamics between "locals" and "newcomers." By examining the interplay of religious spaces within the territory and their impact on identity and social networks, the author illustrates broader social issues beyond the religious dimension. This exploration underscores how cult spaces can wield significant influence in navigating the uncertain social milieu of suburban territories.

Lastly, "My space in our home: young people strategies to access housing in Lisbon" is the title of the fourth article. Co-authored by Maria Assunção Gato and Filipa Ramalheite, this article encapsulates the essence of the motto that inspired the organization of this dossier, shedding light not only on the uncertainties surrounding housing and the lifestyles of young adults but also on the broader context of multiple challenges they currently face. In Lisbon, housing affordability presents a multifaceted challenge, especially for young adults and their life trajectories. This article delves into strategies employed to address housing affordability issues, notably examining the advantages and challenges young adults encounter when sharing a house with non-family members. Often viewed as a temporary solution, cohabiting with strangers serves as an economic strategy enabling many young adults to remain in or near the city. However, it is essential to recognize that these strategies can entail a loss of fundamental rights.



Acknowledgements

Maria Assunção Gato acknowledges the support of the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT, Portugal) through Iscte - University Institute of Lisbon, under the transitional rule of DL57/2016, amended by Law 57/2017, and through DINÂMIA'CET-Iscte (project UIDB/03127/2020).