

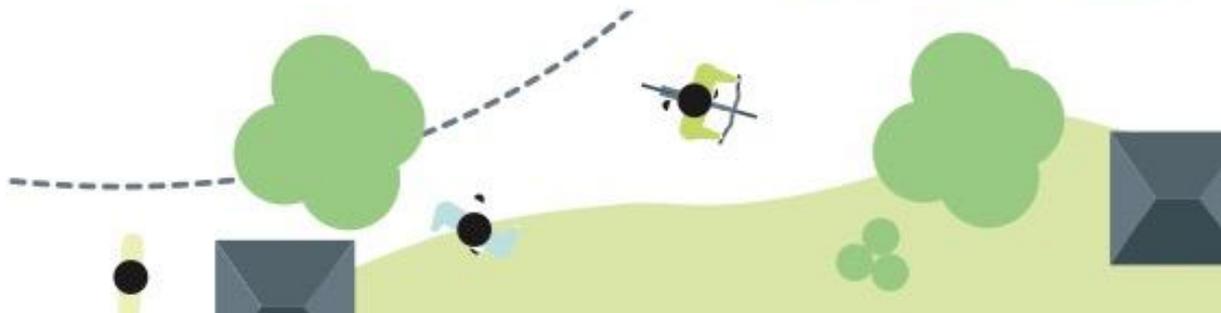


RETOMAR A

# CIDADE

22 outubro 2019 · 18h30

MIRA FORUM · PORTO



## PENSAR O COMUM

### COHOUSING COMO SOLUÇÃO HABITACIONAL

COM TRADUÇÃO SIMULTÂNEA EM INGLÊS E PORTUGUÊS

COM:

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PÚBLICO

ORGANIZAÇÃO



APOIO



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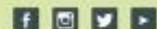
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## SESSION OVERVIEW

The initiative 'PENSAR O COMUM: cohousing as a housing solution', organized by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Portugal, by the Goethe-Institut Portugal, by Habitar Porto and by the Morphologies and Territorial Dynamics Group of the Centre for Architecture and Urbanism Studies of the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto (MDT-CEAU-FAUP), took place in Porto, on 22 October 2019, following the 'O(Porto)nidades' held last year. It was the third "Resuming the City" event, a series of events of the Goethe-Institut Portugal and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Portugal that focuses on some of the most pressing issues of urban development in Lisbon and Porto. The initiative aimed to jointly reflect the relevance and timeliness of this shared life and housing model in view of the ongoing processes of commodification, financialisation and gentrification. Who can serve this model?

The round table held at MIRA FORUM, under the moderation of journalist Abel Coentrão, sought to answer these questions, crossing three distinct European realities: that of Porto, with the presence of Mariana Almeida, from Habitar Porto; that of Berlin, with the participation of Inka Drohn, from Arch.id Berlin; and that of Barcelona, with the voice of Josep Maria Montaner, professor at the Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Barcelona and former city councilor for urbanism of Barcelona (2015-2019). With a different experience from the other two contexts, the adoption of the notion of cohousing in Portugal is still recent and limited, being mainly associated with the idea of assisted residences oriented towards the elderly or young institutionalised adolescents, despite the existence of housing cooperatives and some models of shared housing. In turn, Germany brings together more than 5000 cohousing experiences, with different models and modes of housing and financing, based on the planning, sharing and construction of collective spaces, read as mechanisms of access to housing and regulation of the price of land and the real estate market in cities such as Berlin. Barcelona also represents another emblematic example in terms of cohousing, adopted and promoted by the municipality, through the transfer of public properties and the collective construction and management of common spaces, with different uses and mixing of public spaces.



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## ROUNDTABLE

### Abel Coentrão (Jornal Público) - Moderation

- context of urban pressure, especially in large cities that, concentrating more services and job opportunities, attract population
- housing as a financial asset and its impact on the housing market
- increase in housing prices and increasing weight on the family budget
- the need for housing diversity and cohousing as a possibility to 'equate a shared lifestyle'
- need to question:
  - to whom it can serve: the elderly, through the promotion of active ageing, families and growth spaces, diversity of segments
  - how it is managed, who produces and pays for the collective space
- 'cohousing' as an 'unstabilised notion':
  - that combines private and common spaces
  - where there is great diversity, with each group defining its approach
  - collaborative processes
- in the Portuguese context, the field of cohousing experiences is still embryonic

### Mariana Almeida (Habitar Porto)

- reference to Habitar Porto, with housing experiences that seek to identify 'which interlocutors can be mobilize'.
- need to diversify the range of housing developers as a way to diversify the range of beneficiaries of housing
- intention to 'not sectorize, but rather broaden the understanding of cohousing'.
- reading about the existing experiences in the Portuguese context:
  - shared house - several residents share the space to reduce expenses, 'co-habitation as a necessity, beyond the desire to share'.
  - housing cooperatives - with a dated genesis and currently lower incidence and support, presents itself as a 'process of collective management, but not of sharing spaces', also referring to the problem of cooperatives being a different way of inserting housing in the market without ensuring that they do not become, in the future, financial assets
  - shared municipal houses - promoted by municipalities, for specific cases as previously institutionalised adolescents, to promote their social integration and autonomy - the partnership with the third sector as support and interlocutor
  - senior housing - assisted residences, aimed at the elderly, promoting active aging and delaying hospitalization
- these experiences as illustrations of different processes, interlocutions and partnerships
- need to debate the intention of living the collective, the impact of these experiences and their possibilities.

## Inka Drohn (arch.id Berlin)

- 'Cooperative housing without profit-orientation: a new form of living together'
- experiences to 'add a little colour to our grey cities'.
- reports on experiences of collective ownership and community management, with more than 5,000 experiences of cohousing in Germany and 500 in Berlin.
- importance of the social, environmental and economic dimensions and their growing awareness
- reflection on the concept of cohousing and the difficulty in defining it: variation of models and modes of housing, although involving co-production:
  - Co(llective)planning and/or co(llective) building and/or Co(llective)Housing
  - participative processes
  - shares spaces at different levels / intensities
- reference to the American definition that refers, in addition to shared spaces, to co-development, co-design and co-organisation of the process
- an important aspect is autonomy! That means: autonomous selforganisation
- reflection on the variability of approaches to the idea of cohousing: shared flats, cluster flats, community-led housing, community-driven housing
- example of cluster apartments, which allow the conciliation of shared spaces, with medical support, and conditioned mobility - it should be noted that the needs for assistance in housing do not always correspond to the geriatric segment, but that it is an instrument for independence and autonomy in different situations - highlighting the 'value of sharing in all phases of life'.
- example on the possibility of combinations of audiences and cross-financing models, reconciling different typologies and segments for some areas to finance price reductions in others
- reference to the variability of financial and legal models: cooperatives, collective partnerships and Joint Owner Builder Groups, land lease models, such as for example community land trusts, associations and funds, or combinations of the above
- mention of the potential of these instruments as mechanisms of access to housing and regulation of the price of land and real estate market
- mention of community land trusts or public land lease models and the possibility of establishing extended periods as a mechanism for reserving land (e.g. Berlin with 60- or 99-years concessions).
- warning of the increase in the price of housing and its growing economic inaccessibility
- cohousing and the possibility for each group to plan and build according to their collective wishes.
- mention of a social and environmental awareness: 'the people available to think about housing in the collective will also be available to think about the city and society for the future, taking into account the environmental balance'. (When the future users are involved in the planning and building, they will naturally pay more attention to the longterm running and maintenance costs. Therefore, they will plan and built automatically more sustainable and resourcefriendly, then an investor whose only aim is a short-term return on investment.)
- reference to two key points: soil is a critical factor (because of its exchange value and the need to create products that, through various mechanisms, never enter the market dynamics).

**Josep Maria Montaner** (Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Barcelona)

- shares practices from his experience in the municipality of Barcelona, as a councillor
- reference to the origins and contributions of the ideas underlying cohousing - appropriation, self-construction, participation, empowerment -, their authors and projects
- reference to the current context of the urban incidence of evictions, demolitions, debts related to housing (income or bank credit) and bank rescues.
- mention the distance between housing needs and supply in the real estate market (inaccessible to many)
- shares the experience of the Barcelona Plan for the Right to the City 2015-2016 and its axes (emergency housing responses, appropriate use of housing, expansion of affordable housing, expansion and improvement of the housing stock), to which adds the idea of the 'common' (towards community use).
- highlights the broad idea of civic and self-organised management of common goods and urban heritage, of which the cohousing component is only one aspect
- highlights the space between institutions and needs
- idea of cohousing associated with the intentional sharing of spaces
- questions about bureaucracy and mistrust in participation, and how the processes of cohousing can contribute to overcoming these difficulties.
- questions about whether public land ownership and collective management of construction can be qualities and mechanisms of accessible housing and its continuity
- municipal promotion of cohousing experiences, through competitions for collective construction on public soil
- examples of cohousing in Barcelona and some possibilities: the transition from occupations to the formalization of community organizations, the sharing of uses and mixing of publics.

## **DISCUSSION**

- introduction by the moderator on the **need for 'deconstruction'**: of the conceptions of cohousing, of the sharing of common spaces, of citizenship and of the processes of participation in housing, questioning: 'to what extent can these models of living change the ways of living and producing the city'.
- question about **how cohousing can expand its impact**: 'whether it only solves the problem of cohousers or whether they can be open to the city, in particular by making its resources available':
  - were given examples of experiences in which the shared facilities allowed the creation of activities for wider audiences and constituted a starting point for the dynamisation of the neighbourhood.

- it was also mentioned the possibility of making the services created available to external users through payment, generating resources for the collective to support their expenses.
- the **question of municipal promotion of these initiatives through contests** and the question of whether these processes could be 'repeating the liberal model of competition and privilege of economic criteria', as well as questioning in what ways and at what stages they could be introduced:
    - mention of the example in Amsterdam where the competition was replaced by a lottery, as well as the different experiences and approaches tested in the municipality of Barcelona in different editions/stages, reinforcing the need to test and experiment with more suitable models
    - was mentioned as, despite risks and disadvantages, the competitive process introduced an awareness of the need for a 'social concept' and an 'environmental concept' that could lead the proposals, and thus extend these approaches as a broad awareness mechanism - 'what was previously an option, is now almost an obligation'.
    - mention of the duration of collective processes and the importance of mechanisms that can ensure soil over time, such as municipal land acquisition to meet future needs and the role of community land trusts
  - This is a question about property and cooperatives as processes to promote housing, which do **not ensure collective property but rather promote individualization and privatization**, and sometimes the placing of fires on the free market, including promoting gentrification, questioning the possibilities and mechanisms that can be opposed:
    - was discussed as to how cohousing can constitute a mechanism that allows the sale, but not real estate speculation, referring that 'the risk of the free market is the profit-driven approach', in which 'funds and investors are not taking the market to the top' (qualifying it), but rather seeking only the profit
    - the experimental nature and variability of cohousing experiences (built and planned, public and private, with different approaches) was mentioned, but also how control mechanisms were established in Spain that do not allow housing - when benefiting from public funding - not to be placed on the real estate market, allowing individual investment to be reimbursed, but to return to management structures for reinvestment
    - was highlighted that cohousing can constitute a 'mechanism of population fixation and counter-gentrification'.
    - experiences of cooperative processes and their benefits were also shared, highlighting their variability.
  - questions on the **difficulty of ensuring the continuity of collective processes**, especially in the case of 'total dependence on the State' and in view of the possibilities of political change, recognising that 'the State is not neutral, nor an abstract entity'; questioned whether

community land trusts, and in general 'shared responsibility between State, residents and IPSSs' could constitute a mechanism that 'protects from political reorientation'.

- it was discussed that 'continuity has to be ensured by those involved', countering state dependency and its political fluctuations.
  
- commentary on the concept of cohousing and whether the **idea of collective life** can be constituted as a 'nostalgic search', an attempt to 'recreate the sense of comfort', a 'reinvention of the community associated with the villages' and a 'reinvention of the village in the city', underestimating the also present sense of control in the small media and the freedoms brought by the urban environment; he wondered about 'how to empower and organize civil movements that can create and manage fairer cities'.
  
- commentary on the **complexity of processes** that, like cohousing, create a 'simultaneity of legal and urban figures', raising difficult questions in different areas; it was warned that, particularly in the Portuguese context, 'there is no public land that allows the implementation of these tools', witnessing a 'tendency to alienate public property'; it was questioned 'whether what can be passed between generations should cease to be a financial asset' and whether 'the MDGs should not foresee public land in strategic locations' to respond to present and future needs:
  - mechanisms and possibilities for soil maintenance, such as land banks and community land trusts, were discussed
  - highlighted the importance of ensuring housing responses to different segments and needs, especially in the face of difficulties in accessing finance, such as in the case of low-income and elderly families
  - the role of collectively managed soils as a mechanism to control political oscillation in access to land, and of combined financing as a tool to prevent gentrification was highlighted
  
- final synthesis highlighting that '**we do not have to reinvent the wheel**' and that 'we can work with existing tools' (such as cooperatives); that it is not a question of 'nostalgia' for living in the collective, but rather the process of collective management; and that 'Portugal has a long way to go' regarding the different forms of housing and collective management, and that the sharing of experiences between different contexts can be useful for all those involved.

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<sup>1</sup> PDM = Plano Diretor Municipal