

# **Urban Housing**

## **4 sessions:**

### **1. Proptech, Platforms and Housing: Geographical variegations in a Nordic context**

**Session organiser:** Guy Baeten, Malmö Universitet, Sweden, **E-mail:** [guy.baeten@mau.se](mailto:guy.baeten@mau.se)

Inspired by an all-pervading ideology of dataism (van Dijck, 2014, Haggart and Tusikov, 2023), the introduction of proptech and digital tools in the housing market has led to, first, rapidly growing amounts of recorded information about land, housing and properties; second, collected data becoming an asset in itself over and beyond property as an asset; and third, new actors, products and services entering the housing market (Landau-Ward and Porter in Porter et al 2019).

Research in the field has shown the how the rapid growth of digital housing platforms that has expanded the field of short-term-lets, shared housing and AirBnb (Maalsen, 2019; Sadowski, 2020a; Shaw, 2020; Fields and Rogers, 2021, Fields, 2022), leading to the emergence of 'platform landlords' in the wake of the foreclosure crisis in the US (Fields and Vergerio, 2022). Another strand of research investigates the social effects of digital technology in the individual dwelling as it becomes 'smart' and connected through IoT, energy efficiency installations and other technological developments. (McGuirk, 2015; Maalsen and Sadowski, 2019; Maalsen, 2020). Attention is also being paid to how proptech leads to infringements on tenant rights and, following from that, housing advocacy targeting digital landlords and their digital tools (see McElroy, 2018, Maharawal and McElroy, 2018, Graziani and Shi, 2020).

As much research stems from an Anglo-American and private ownership forms of tenures, this session aims to stress the geographically variegated nature of the implementations and consequences of property technologies due to their path-dependent character. It welcomes contributions that empirically answer questions such as:

What kind of proptech do landlords in specific countries or cities adopt and it what ways?

In what ways is the implementation of proptech changing power relations on the housing market? What new actors, products and services are entering the housing market through the digitalization of housing? Where and to what extent is 'platform landlordism' appearing in a Nordic context? What hampers or supports its development?

What consequences does the adoption of proptech and platforms have for the landlord-tenant relation? What new forms of tenant discrimination emerge and what forms of existing discrimination are reinforced? What forms of tenant advocacy following the implementation of proptech have surfaced?

How do the financialization and the digitalization of housing hang together? To what extent and in what ways have property data become an asset in itself?

### **2. (De)Valuing land: Speculation, Housing and Residents**

**Session organiser:** Salla Jokela, Tampere University , Finland, **E-mail:** [salla.e.jokela@tuni.fi](mailto:salla.e.jokela@tuni.fi)

Land value differentiation lies at the heart of processes that shape urban space both within and across cities. In large urban areas, coalitions of local governments, developers, firms, and public organizations frequently form around growth-inducing urban development projects (Logan & Molotch, 2007). These projects often involve intensified land use and the construction of housing and amenities designed to attract "high-value" residents, visitors, and capital. As a result, land values rise, along with the value of housing assets built upon it. Speculation

around increasing asset values further attracts transnational financial capital. While these dynamics generate profits for asset-owning investors and residents, they simultaneously challenge the inclusivity of urban spaces and reduce housing affordability (Adkins et al., 2020; Aalbers, 2015).

Conversely, in urban areas where land values are comparatively low, stagnant, or declining—such as the margins of metropolitan regions or in ‘shrinking’ cities—growth coalitions tend to be absent. Here, land and housing assets are often subject to speculation around potential value decline. Nevertheless, pressures for urban renewal and growth persist, as local governments seek to adapt to shifting economic realities. These dynamics also have implications for the inclusivity of urban spaces and the quality of housing conditions.

This session explores the context dependent combinations between land value differentiation, the assetization of housing, and the valuation of residents, whether desired residents or actual residents, whose living conditions are at stake. We welcome papers that examine how these dynamics unfold in diverse urban contexts across the Nordics and beyond. Potential topics include, but are not limited to:

Assetization and financialization of urban land and housing

Dynamics of land and property value in shrinking and growing urban areas

Affordability, availability, and inclusivity of urban spaces

Tensions between long-term and temporary populations

Tensions between use values and exchange values in urban space

Allocation of investments and socio-spatial differentiation of urban areas

Residents’ responses to growth-inducing urban development projects or smart shrinkage policies

Implications of city-regionalism and other state strategies for differentiated land values and housing development

#### **References:**

Aalbers, M. B. (2015). The great moderation, the great excess and the global housing crisis. *International Journal of Housing Policy*, 15(1), 43-60.

Adkins, L., Cooper, M., & Konings, M. (2020). *The Asset Economy* (1st edition). Polity.

Logan, J. R., & Molotch, H. (2007). *Urban fortunes: The political economy of place, with a new preface* (20<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition). University of California Press.

### **3. Nordic property spaces**

**Session organiser:** Nicholas Blomley, Simon Fraser University , Canada, Päivi Kymäläinen, Tampere University, Finland **E-mail:** paivi.kymalainen@tuni.fi

We seek proposals for papers that engage the geographies of property in land in the Nordic context. Property relations are determined in laws and legal processes. At the same time, they are negotiated and contested in political debates, as well as lived and performed in the everyday actions of people. Property relations shape a social order, and are also shaped by it, organizing access and use of land. Such relations can sustain relations of dominance, denial, and control. They can also create community, enable counter-hegemonic possibilities, and creative futures. Property can be both highly individualized, and inclusively collective. It organizes and constitutes space, building boundaries, and opening doors. Property relations anchor people to place, or work to displace them.

We invite papers that engage these questions, and discuss how property is formulated, performed and lived in the Nordic context. Possible themes include yet are not restricted to:

Territoriality and property  
Landscapes and places of property  
Nordic property vs other forms of property  
Indigenous property geographies  
Property, politics and democracy  
Inequality, rights and justice of property  
Planning and property relations  
Art in imagining property  
Boundaries of property  
Defining, performing and contesting 'everyone's rights'  
Commoning  
State property

#### 4. Thinking with buildings: exploring the intersection of Architecture and Human Geography

**Session organiser:** Erik Jönsson, Uppsala University, Sweden, **E-mail:** erik.jonsson@kultgeog.uu.se

For architects, “space” is typically materialized and conceived at the scale of a building or landscape, while geographers position “space” theoretically and more broadly in a wide variety of ways. But how do understandings of “space” intersect and contrast within these two disciplines? This session gathers papers that investigate the materiality of buildings and built landscapes as analysed in Human Geography, or that deal with the relationship between Architecture and Human Geography as two distinct, yet potentially overlapping disciplines that understand space and its production in complementary ways. What can geographers and architects learn from each other to understand the role of built environments within a rapidly unfolding climate emergency (Calder & Bremner, 2021)? What does it mean to apply a focus on metabolism and flows so prominent within the emergence of urban political ecology at the scale of buildings rather than cities or neighbourhoods (Kaika, 2005; Vogel, 2016)? What can it mean to explore buildings as monuments (Doss, 2011; Harvey, 1979), or as structures conditioning everyday lives? Do built environments today underpin or contest political retrogression? How do Geographers and Architects approach (the politics of) aesthetics in relation to built environments, and what does this do for the kinds of questions asked and conclusions drawn? Do the theorizations and methodologies prominent within landscape geography remain relevant only to the outdoors, or should we also analyse indoor landscapes? These are just some of the questions we are interested in for a session where we are looking for empirically grounded and conceptually ambitious papers on Architecture and Geography.

#### References

- Calder, B., & Bremner, G. A. (2021). Buildings and energy: architectural history in the climate emergency. *The Journal of Architecture*, 26(2), 79–115.
- Doss, E. (2011) *Memorial mania: public feeling in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Harvey, D. (1979) Monument & Myth. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 69(3): 362-381.
- Kaika, M. (2005) *City of flows: modernity, nature, and the city*. New York: Routledge.
- Vogel, S. (2016) *Thinking like a mall: environmental philosophy after the end of nature*. Cambridge: MIT Press.