

Universidad Politecnica de Madrid ETSAM May 10-11th/June 7-8-9th 2021

Anne Lacaton Workshop

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INTRO

More than ever, housing is the most important space in the cities and for everyone.

More than ever, architects need to have a clear position about the situation

More than ever, inhabitants need our radical positions.

It is now, or never. Housing is the «monument» of democracies.

In a way, every brief of Anne Lacaton's workshop for the MCH, sets a question in which lies a hidden demand for an implicit manifesto.

For many editions, MCH students have worked around the topic of **Good Living Conditions**. Although it was clear for us before, many others didn't want to see the problem and only a very few were aware of it.

The global pandemic has suddenly changed our relation and perception of the living space and the public space. This experience has made more obvious to everyone, that the spaces for living are not good enough and do never offer the freedom and flexibility that we could expect. If we are optimistic, this experience should eventually provide a possible perspective for change.

The challenge for this workshop is to push this idea to the maximum.

No Site, no Design, just Ideas, Positions and Statements.

QUESTION: WHAT MAKES GOOD CONDITIONS OF LIVING?

The workshop topic will emphasize on the optimal conditions to live in the city, in a public space, in the neighborhood, in collective space, with the close community, in the individual space. The city should provide exceptional quality of life by offering a large range of facilities, proximities, and pleasures, as well as a large variety of typologies to fit with different needs, expectations and ways of life.

The question is opened to a very large concept of housing, which is not specially responding to a "market product", intended for a traditional middle-class family, but, beyond, rethink the principles of the space for living and how housing is designed: how to create good living conditions -architecturally, spatially, technically, sustainably, etc.- such that, a very large and varied number of people could find a space for living that they could appropriate of.

WHAT MAKES GOOD CONDITIONS OF LIFE?

WHAT MAKES THE QUALITY OF A SPACE?

WHAT PRODUCES SENSATIONS IN BEING IN A SPACE?

WHAT SHOULD I FIND IN MY CLOSE NEIGHBORHOOD?

WHAT MAKES THE QUALITY OF A NEIGHBORHOOD?

WHICH IS MY RESPONSIBILITY AS AN ARCHITECT?

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

To find good responses to these questions we should lead towards a sustainable life.

How can the architects contribute to an evolution of the attitudes?

The exploration will be made from the scale of individual.

It will not be a sort of theoretical proposition, but instead, a collection of measures that could be implemented here and now.

This is about the feelings, the perception, the movement in a space, or from one space to another.

It means that the point of view is always from inside-out.

The goal is not to produce a design, but to define a set of qualities and situations, which all together could make a housing project, in the sense of a coherent proposition.

Intentions, positions, convictions, are essential to feed a project

Building an attitude, establish a statement, is a preliminary to the design of the project.

QUALITIES OF SPACE

Quality in housing could be based on the idea of the well-being and pleasure, the variety of spaces and atmospheres, a conception of the comfort other than the one normalized by standards, calculations, models.

Dwellings produced today are neither generous, nor spacious and are no longer adapted to the evolution and to the need or the wishes of the contemporary inhabitants. Standards mostly lead to build dwellings providing minimal surfaces and standardized spaces, plans, and even comfort. The comfort normative is now much more often determined by rules and calculations, by the performance of technology, estimated through a grid of criteria, by a financial profitability. **Housing has become a product, while it should be, first of all, a question for the sensations, quality of life, and freedom of use.**

The minimum space does not correspond to the contemporary way of life any more, and neither to what the inhabitants expects from the space for everyday and allow extended uses of the housing. Minimum space is not a sustainable concept. The house has to offer spaces with different characteristics and different atmospheres, spaces free of any defined functions and totally appropriable. The space to be lived must be generous, comfortable, appropriable, flexible and economic. A generous space is a necessary luxury. How to give more space without increasing the cost? How to enlarge significantly the usable space? It is necessary to invent new housing typologies to develop: density, nearness, mixed use, quality, luxury and pleasure. The densification and the quality of life are not opposites, nor incompatible issues.

It is necessary to invent new housing conditions, giving the inhabitants, again, an attractive idea of living collectively in a denser city, by creating an architecture that reconciles the need of individuality and privacy, -often expressed by the desire of a single house in a garden- with the collective need of density. Besides, community and density become inescapable and reasonable for the future of cities, so to limit the infinite development of the urban territory. This is a basis for sustainability. Ecology, saving energy and natural resources cannot be only resolved by adding new technology or materials or new systems, stuck on the existing models. Its consequence should not be a closer, reduced, or a more protected or reinforced house. It should renew the way of living and introduce new forms and characters into housing spaces. This idea will not work if the inhabitant is not involved being even the main actor of this sustainability agenda. So, the inhabitant must receive a 'plus', finding better conditions for her/his living space.

PHASE 1. CHARTER OF QUALITIES

For Phase 1, the task of the students is to define a list of mandatory qualities, with a limited number of points. The work starts probably with an analysis and a **criticism of universal housing today**. The result could be as a sort of **Charter of Quality, agreed and shared by the whole workshop**. The Charter will be mostly text. Avoiding illustrations could even be more radical.

The following order of tasks is suggested to address the topic:

1. What is good housing in the city?

What is expected from housing, in terms of use, everyday life, feelings from the point of view of the inhabitant?

2. What is your critical point of view?

Does generally housing meet everyone's dream or needs

Why is housing -in general- not good.

Where are the problems? Conditions of production?

Does it have to do with the resignation of public authorities in their role of setting the level of ambition for what is the most important for people: the housing

or the loss of control by public authorities, which only can guarantee high ambitions?

3. What is a Charter of essential quality principles?

Defining a set of principles (8 to 12) which should be mandatory in the design of every dwelling, could drive to a sort of « Articles of a Constitution ».

The result could be a small booklet, with **just words**.

PHASE 2. IMAGINING / ILLUSTRATING

It is my conviction that the most difficult of our tasks is to build ideas, opinions, positions, necessary and preliminary to any project. Then we must communicate them in a clear and convincing way and of course to apply them ourselves in the project's design.

As architects, we need to speak with politicians, bureaucrats and developers to explain and sustain our ideas, but also to the people, the first users of the space.

And we must learn how to do it, to open different dialogs, use different tools communication, but to communicate those same ideas and goals.

Images serve the politicians and their language. But the most important would be the words. When they advocate for ideas, the words of the architects, trouble them.

Starting from the agreed **Charter of qualities** that every housing should meet, students will define individually in the second stage, spatial concepts to illustrate and communicate them to the general public and authorities. Formats could range from a set of images, collages, to a short film, or a combination of those, travelling and zooming in and out of the collage.

We will use fragments from images and situations. Images need to be made from the inside, within a situation, a space, an atmosphere. Show how the space is used, always close to the subject, from the smallest to the largest.

They might speak about individual space, program, life, movement, community space, public space, city, relationship with the exterior, the sky, the city, the trees...about relationships between people.

Attentively selected and analyzed images, can become catalysts for any project and define architectural intentions. As space generators, images can become an instrument for research, and for a **project's driving force**.

Through simple operations of collage, accumulation, sampling, superposition, transformative addition, contamination, every image can gain a new dimension and their assembly generates space sequences, atmospheres, journeys, and even stories, which can lay below the basis of a project.

PROGRAM

The workshop is structured in a preliminary stage, and two more phases separated by an intermission period of 2 weeks.

PREPARATION

To prepare the workshop, groups of 3 to 4 students shall be made in advance. During the week previous to the beginning of the workshop, each member of the group will collect information and material related to the topic of the workshop. Those can be found in the form of a journal or newspaper article, report, particular thoughts, surveys, individual opinions, or writings touching on everyday life conditions, which lead towards the issue of good living conditions. The scope is that the individual and the group gathers a **critical position** on the topic and gets ready to compile a **Charter for Good Housing**.

PHASE 1. Charters of Qualities

During the first two days (May 10-11th), the groups will have a first contact with workshop leader, Anne Lacaton, and will be able to expose their analysis, findings, critical positions and first draft of a 'decatalogue' of mandatory qualities. This shall be exposed in a brief presentation. During both days, every group will receive several comments and will keep working on the content of the charter. Each group will deliver their own Charter with limited principles by the end of Tuesday 11th.

INTERMISSION. Common Charter

From May 11th until May 27th, the whole workshop must assemble their lists and find an agreement on the common final Charter. (Probably a number of articles will be similar to every group, and you will have to choose some among the others). The groups will gather assistant professor Diego Garcia-Setien during the week of May 27th in order to expose the development of the WS Charter, and to prospect future illustrative tasks for Phase 2.

PHASE 2. Imagining/Illustrating

The Illustrated Charter for Good Housing Conditions will be developed during the 2nd phase, in 3 days. On June 7th students will show the draft of the agreed and integrated Charter and will start drafting a kind of storyboard, album or video to illustrate the Charter.

This **work should be individual**, in order to gather a more substantial collection of cases and possibilities, starting from the same statement of qualities. Collage or image-compounds seem to be an appropriate tool.

A short video (1' max.) could be produced -like a short teaser travelling across the collage or zooming in and out- in order to show the potential and qualities of space. It could be done with a smartphone. Each collage or compound should be complemented by **a very short and sharp explanation** of the qualities of the space, with a title and a limited number of 50-70 words. The workshop group will agree on a **common format of edition**, in order to assemble them all in a single booklet of the workshop.

At the end of Phase 2, students will make a presentation of their work to a Jury where their ideas will be exposed, tested and confronted to a representative of a Public Housing department, a sociologist, a film director or a philosopher. This sets the tone also for the presentation.

CALENDAR

PHASE 0. PREPARATION

May 4th to May 10th: Workshop preparation and documentation

PHASE 1. CHARTER OF QUALITIES

Day 1: Monday May 10th

10:00-11:00. AL's Lecture and Workshop presentation

11:00-15:00. Group Reviews of drafted Charters

Day 2: Tuesday May 11th

10:00-14:00. Group Work in studio and reviews

14:00-15:00. Draft of Groups Charters

T W O W E E K S I N T E R M I S S I O N

Day 3: Thursday May 27th

10:00-12:00. Mid-Review of Agreed Workshop Charter (with DG-S)

PHASE 2. IMAGINING/ILLUSTRATING

Day 4: Monday June 7th

14:00-16:00. Group Presentations

16:00-19:00. Group Work in studio and reviews. Storyboards

Day 5: Tuesday June 8th

14:00-19:00. Group Work in studio and reviews. Booklet and videos

Development of final presentation

Day 6: Tuesday June 9th

14:00-17:00. Final development of proposals. Booklet and videos

17:00-19:00. Final Presentation to the Jury
