



Housing Commons

Alternatives to Housing Through
Urban Commoning

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Abstract

The paper builds upon the concepts of the right to the city and urban commoning, to advance the theory of housing commons. Moreover, it draws on selected initiatives to highlight commonalities and differences, and to portray the diversity of contemporary housing commons. We articulate the framework of urban commoning that urban commoners proclaim through Lefebvre's (1968) right to the city, i.e., urban dwellers' collective right and power over urban qualities and the urbanization processes. This has been embraced by the new social urban movements to deploy a range of actions and organizational forms, referred to as urban commoning for housing provision and the production of "common" built space, which are in conflict to neoliberal policies and the new urban enclosures. Along these lines the paper lays down a framework for understanding and analyzing housing commons as a social institution with social rights and responsibilities, founded on the principles of self-organization, de-commodification, social support and solidarity. On the empirical front, the paper analyses different (in spatial, political, organizational terms) cases of successful housing commons worldwide, to access their characteristics along the aforementioned principles. The paper concludes that in the present times, where housing problems and homelessness intensify, housing commons comprise not simply a mosaic of viable solutions, but a different mode of urban living imbued by the values of collectiveness, self-organization and solidarity.

Résumé

Cet article traite les concepts du droit à la ville et des communs urbains pour arriver à la théorie des communs de logement. En outre, il souligne des initiatives pour mettre en lumière les points communs et les différences et exposer toute la diversité contemporaine des communs de logement. Nous retraçons le cadre théorique des communs urbains que les « urban commoners » proclament à travers Le Droit à la ville de Lefebvre (1968), c'est à dire, le pouvoir et le droit collectif des habitants des villes face aux qualités urbaines et aux processus d'urbanisation. Les nouveaux mouvements sociaux urbains ont embrassé cela et ont déployé toute une série d'actions et de formes d'organisation, que l'on appelle communs urbains pour palier à la demande de logements et la production d'un espace « commun » construit, qui sont en conflit avec les politiques néolibérales et les nouveaux espaces

urbains. Dans ce sens, l'article établit un cadre pour comprendre et analyser les communs de logement comme une institution sociale avec des droits et responsabilités sociales, fondée sur les principes d'auto-organisation, de démarchandisation, de support social et de solidarité. Du côté empirique, l'article analyse différents cas de communs urbains qui fonctionnent à travers le monde (au niveau spatial, politique et organisationnel), afin d'accéder à ses caractéristiques avec les principes mentionnés auparavant. La conclusion de l'article est qu'à présent, avec l'augmentation des problèmes de logement et des sans-abris, les communs de logement n'incluent qu'une mosaïque de solutions viables, mais aussi un mode de vie urbaine différent gouverné par des valeurs de collectivité, d'auto-organisation et de solidarité.

Keywords: Activism, Commons, Dwelling, Urban space, Community, Public space, Vacancy, Gentrification, Spain, Uruguay

Mot-clés : Biens communs, Espace public, Espace urbain, Communauté, Espagne, Uruguay, Activisme, Habiter, Inoccupation, Gentrification

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Introduction

In the post-2008 world and the present times of economic recessions, housing crises emerge all over the globe. From the continuous eviction processes of unfulfilled mortgage owners, the gentrification and zoning processes in the urban terrain and the shrinkage of public housing to the ongoing increase of vacant housing stock, housing can be viewed as a crucial and fundamental right that is at risk. Despite the decrease in public care facilities, there are several initiatives and projects around the globe that put the issue of housing and inhabiting in the urban terrain as a priority in their everyday struggles. Together with the rise of neighborhood assemblies in major cities, we can see a significant number of initiatives that combine the theories of commons and commoning with the creation and provision of adequate living conditions.

Our research has gone through a wide range of initiatives and organizational forms in the production of “common” built space, referred to as housing commons all over the globe. In our analysis we define a housing resource as a commons, based on the aspects and degrees of self-organization and de-commodification, but we also lay down a framework for understanding and analyzing housing commons as a social institution of alternative housing provision. We state that Lefebvre’s concept of *right to the city* is then expanded in the use-values and re-appropriation of spaces of everyday life in the cities, including housing and re-using of empty spaces through practices of urban commoning and the active role that urban actors (neighborhood and citizen initiatives, urban movements) play.

With this paper we aim to clarify the nuances in the housing commoning nexus and view the housing commons ideals as a capable alternative in pro-

viding adequate housing and living in present times. These are seen as an institution of alternative housing provision, organized by a solid community of housing commoners, unified by the values of solidarity and the practice of de-commodification and self-organization. The theoretical framework of the *right to the city* through urban commoning helps us reflect the everyday actions of urban and housing commoners in a wider scale, where there can be a possible acceptance for the need towards a society for productive use of (idle) housing resources and adequate living conditions for urban dwellers.

Neoliberal urban enclosures

Since Midnight Notes Collective (1990) first named the neoliberal urban policies as “new urban enclosures” and portrayed them not only in the production but also in the reproduction sector of everyday life, many established urban values have altered, yet the core of this problematization has remained relevant.

According to Hodkinson (2012a), the mechanisms of old as well as new enclosures constitute and expand through the neoliberal policies in the urban terrain, being not only a metaphor for enclosing processes, but also an explanation of what is really going on in the urban field. Access to housing is jeopardized, rights to land and public assets are obliterated, public goods and services, such as healthcare and education, are cut, labor rights are dismantled, leading to broad processes of dispossession and the erosion of social rights and urban relations (Zavos, Koutrolikou, and Siatitsa 2017, 3–4). Hodkinson states that land enclosures, zoning processes of neighborhood and community exclusion as well as capital gentrification procedures, are the *modus operandi* of neoliberal policies, where cities are viewed only as centers of capital accumulation, consumption and financial speculation.

According to Brenner and Theodore (2002) and Hodkinson (2012b), we would view the mechanisms of neoliberal urban policies and new urban enclosures as:

1. The privatization of public, municipal or communal infrastructure.
2. The gentrification processes in the urban terrain through the construction of mega-projects that lead to the extinction of social housing and other low-rent housing units.

3. The strategies of zoning, the creation of gated communities, urban enclaves, and other “purified” spaces of social reproduction.
4. The privatization and intensified surveillance of open public spaces and the creation of gated spaces only for commercial exploitation and elite consumption.

David Harvey argues that contemporary forms of globalization are characterized by “wholly new mechanisms of dispossession” (2005, 147), producing the “new enclosures” through formal and informal practices, such as gendered oppression (i.e. human trafficking), biometrics, informational accumulation, land grabbing and dispossession, the accumulation of population in urban slums, the Structural Adjustment Programs of the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the WB (World Bank), immigration, wars for raw materials, the debt crisis and environmental pollution and climate change (Midnight Notes Collective And Friends 2009; Vasudevan, McFarlane, and Jeffrey 2008).

Similarly, Massimo De Angelis (2004), referring to the new enclosures, emphasizes that they are carried out through commercialization processes, through attacks on living conditions (privatizations, cuts in social spending, structural adjustment policies, fencing of knowledge, etc.). Summarizing and using Marx’s figure, he concludes that the different types and consequent forms of new enclosures seek to prevent by force any access of people to social wealth in which the competitive market and labor as capital are not mediated (De Angelis 2012).

The right to the city through urban commoning

On the contrary of this framework of the neoliberal urban enclosures and the creation of cities-of-exclusion, there are exceptions that create potential new unforeseen rules in urban everyday life and challenge in practice the process of consumption and the exchange value in urban functions, proposing a collective, “common” use value of public urban space (Hodkinson 2012a; Stavrides 2019). The only way to contest the new urban enclosures is through the production and reproduction of urban commons (Hodkinson 2012b, 516); ironically, the new enclosures have demonstrated not only that the common has not vanished but also that new forms of social cooperation are constantly being produced, including in areas of life where none previously existed (Federici and Linebaugh 2019). Such practices root to the analysis of Lefebvre (1996, 43) and the *right to the city* regarding the contradictions raised be-

tween the “use value” that refers to “the life and time of the city” and the “value” of the capitalist production that refers to “places that are bought and sold, in the consumption of commodities, places and signs. When the collective subject of urban commoners is based upon those values of resistance to the urban enclosures and the *right to the city*, urban commoning becomes a collective practice.

When the characteristics of urban commons coincide with the demands and practices of urban social movements, it is argued that the basic claim of the *right to the city* is satisfied both as a right to everyday life and as a right to creativity (Susser and Tonnelat 2013), which brings us upon to confirm that Lefebvre’s ideas of the right to creativity in the virtuality of the city encourage the values of urban commoning.

We can then comprehend that in between those collective, in-common practices in the public sphere against the logic of new urban enclosures, a new urban space can emerge, an urban common space. Thus, the associated social subjects through the acts of communication and the relations of their actions produce use values which shape the common space as a means of communication, as a community, as an oeuvre, as dwelling and as appropriation of the physical space. In common space, use value and not exchange value becomes the primary criterion by which urban space is produced (Hodkinson 2012a).

Common spaces are places produced by people in an effort to establish a world of commoners that hosts, supports and expresses the community that participates in it. Common spaces are distinct from both public and private spaces as they do not have a top-down controlling authority, but can be seen as the relationship between a social group in its quest to define a world that is shared among members (Stavrvides 2016), or, according to Harvey (2019), urban commons constitute a social relationship between elements of the structured urban environment and autonomous social groups.

From the Right to the City to the right to housing: the emergence of housing commons

The right to the city manifests itself as a superior form of rights: right to freedom, to individualization in socialization, to habitat and inhabit. The right to the oeuvre, to participation and appropriation (clearly distinct from the right to property) are implied

in the right to the city. (Lefebvre, Kofman, and Lebas 1996, 173–74)

The above quote from Lefebvre’s *Right to the city* further opens the theoretical debate in the issues of inhabiting, dwelling and appropriation of spaces, issues of great importance in terms of defining the rights and roles that the collective social subjects (commoners) can play in the urban terrain; the right to appropriation is to physically access, occupy and use urban space, including the right to produce new urban space to meet the needs of inhabitants (Hodkinson 2012b, 516).

In Stavrides’ words (2019, 18), Lefebvre’s idea that the city is the collective oeuvre of its habitants (1996, 173–74) concludes that the potentialization of space is a result of commoning, the result of sharing aspirations but also working in common. Issues that so refer to the urban and housing commoning practices.

Having already listed the features of the common space, the urban commons, in this context of our analysis we will investigate the emergence of the idea of “housing as a commons” through the analyses of contemporary scholars (architects, geographers, political scientists), as well as through the practices of commoners and collectives that implement the housing commoning practices.

The right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and a number of countries prove it with the corresponding constitutional guarantees, although, according to Balmer and Bernet (2015), this fundamental human need does not result in a global access to adequate housing. Viewing historically the State as well as the market weaknesses in reassuring all the issues raised around housing, there is a field for re-inventing the commons in the housing sector (Stavrides 2016; De Angelis 2017).

The effects of the financial-capitalist crisis of 2008 on the issue of housing through mortgages, auctions, etc. raise the question of an anti-capitalist approach of the commons to the said issue. In this context, Hodkinson (2012a) introduces a scheme of three moral values of society which includes the desire to live together and the collective solution to housing needs in the here and now, the need for strategic defense of anti-capitalist commons as barriers to capital and accumulation, as well as the need to create an alternative world in which the commoning process can develop to the detriment of capitalism. In

order to define the housing as a commons we would use Balmer and Bernet's analytical triad (2015, 179), where:

1. Housing is an essential urban resource similar to infrastructure or land.
2. Different actors play different roles in any housing arrangement of housing provision. We can generally talk about "owners" and "users" (e.g. tenants), but, perhaps, it is better to analyze the specific "property rights", i.e. the rights, powers, privileges and immunities that individuals, groups or organizations retain in relation to housing.
3. This "property rights package" perspective highlights the importance of the institutions that regulate the allocation of housing. These mainly include a) property rights and b) public policies, i.e. legislative and economic interventions by the welfare state.

Analyzing specific cases each time based on the above trinity, Balmer and Bernet (2015) consider two key points in order to assess the character of the commons or its lack in a housing resource. These relate to the degree of de-commodification of the housing example, i.e. whether it departs from the market mentality of profit-making, but also whether the relations and the institutional framework (property rights, regulations, etc.) among the housing example prevent this resource from being commodified. The second focusing factor concerns the levels of autonomy or self-organization that the residents, users, commoners of the housing resource individually or collectively "enjoy". This refers to the extent to which social users can have a say, and influence decisions concerning their residence (Balmer and Bernet 2015). Below is the corresponding interpretive scheme they use which we will also use as a guideline in our analysis of defining housing as a commons.

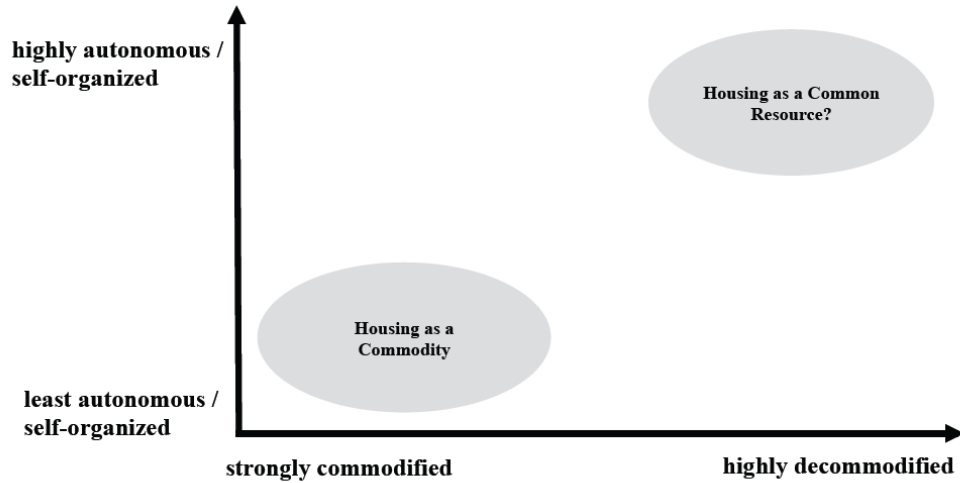


Figure 1: Housing as a commons (Balmer and Bernet 2015, 179)

Stavros Stavrides follows a similar course of analysis. Moving to common ideological starting points both in Lefebvre’s theories of the city and in everyday life, he states that “the potentialization of space is a result of commoning, the result of sharing aspirations but also working in common” (Stavrides 2019, 18). Thus, in the notion of common as both resources and social relations and communities, Stavrides (2016) argues that in order to characterize housing as a potential commons, three assumptions must be met:

1. Regarding the network of social relations that are developing. The house must be perceived and protected as a space to be shared between the inhabitants. That is, a community of inhabitants-societies.
2. Regarding the construction process and the organization pattern. Housing must be produced through cooperation. A community of producers-creators-societies.
3. Regarding the process of appropriation of the residential area. A community of “collective owners”/commoners.

To defend housing commoning, Hodkinson (2012a, 438–39) states that resistance to enclosures is needed by both defending and creating housing com-

mons as forms of protection against the market... and that strategic “housing” commoning defends everyone’s “right to stay put” regardless of tenure, whether against privatization, demolition, repossession, eviction, commodification or displacement.

Seeing the practices that make a housing resource the object of housing commoning, we identify those that are oriented beyond the speculative logics of the market and the real estate market in particular. These practices limit or exclude the margins of individual profit and move in a direction of de-commodification of the house, adequate coverage of dwelling and living needs, as well as the parallel adoption of collective management and self-organization practices.

We would state that housing commons is seen as an institution of alternative housing provision, organized by a solid community of housing commoners, unified by the values of solidarity and the practices of de-commodification and self-organization.

Examples of these alternative forms of collective ownership and housing include a wide range of joint venture projects that come from citizens’ demands and dynamics. Such examples and practices were a historical result of social struggles on the issues of adequate housing and protection of neighborhoods from capitalist exploitation. Those projects can include housing cooperatives, community land trusts, as well as housing projects created in the total housing stock of vacant homes and buildings.

The wide spectrum of housing alternatives in the global scale

In the mosaic of collective housing practices and alternative housing models that are being developed today, the question is both their independence from speculative logics and the prospect of jointly collective and self-organized institutionalization of the operating conditions of each housing model.

In the wide spectrum of co-housing initiatives and projects where “co” may refer to collaborative, communal, collective or cooperative housing (Vestbro 2010), in our analysis, we will focus on defining housing as a commons based upon Balmer’s and Bernet’s analysis (2015), where self-organization and de-

commodification are the two aspects that define a housing unit as a commons or not.

The parameters for such direction are many and concern a set of institutions, goals, rules and practices that take into consideration both the initial motives, the legal form, the institutional framework, the role of the State and of the market in the acquisition-use of a housing resource, as well as the degree of commodification, politicization and self-organization that each example is set in.

Each one of those two cases of housing commons shed light in different parts of the various collective everyday practices in the urban terrain. These practices support the re-appropriation of the city, either based upon Lefebvre's framework of "use value" or by combining those with the role that collective and self-organized actors (commoners) can play. Such innovative tools, coherent with the visions of commoning (Mattei and Quarta 2015) can lead to the evolution and expansion of urban commoning practices. In Stavrides' words (2020), such housing movements actively engage with the "virtuality of the city" and can activate urban potentialities by confronting dominant choices of urban governance that expel huge numbers of people to the peripheries and shanty towns of contemporary metropolises.

***La Borda* housing cooperative, Barcelona (Spain)**

It is beyond doubt that the majority of the Mediterranean countries suffered and endured the most out of the economic crises of the post-2008 world. Gross domestic products shrank, public care systems collapsed and whole areas of citizens' everyday production and reproduction were at risk. Regarding the housing sector, Spain, and especially the Catalonia area suffered the most. As we can see in the diagram below, between 2008 and 2012, more than 80,000 mortgage foreclosures and 20,000 housing eviction verdicts took place only in Catalonia (De Weerd and Garcia 2016).

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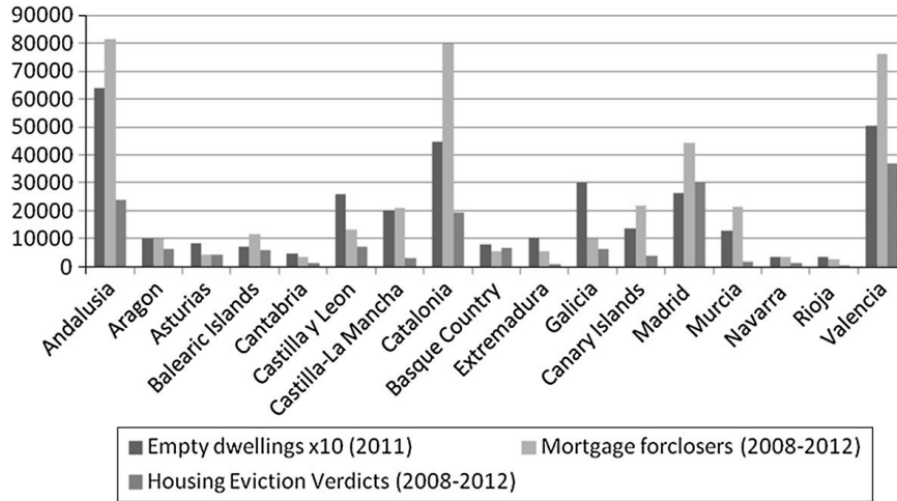


Figure 2: Housing evictions, Mortgage foreclosures & Empty dwellings per Autonomous Community. Source: author’s elaboration with data from INE and Judiciare Statistics (De Weerdt and Garcia 2016, 8)

On the other hand, the bottom-up collective responses were massive in Spain, where new local actors on behalf of the anti-eviction movement, such as the Platform for People Affected by Mortgages (PAH) emerged, challenging national, regional, and local governments that were overwhelmed by the problem (Parés et al. 2017). In the ongoing responsive movemental actions the concepts of the *right to the city* through the use-values and re-appropriation of spaces arised, giving life to collective use in abandoned parks, factories and buildings, also fulfilling the demands for inhabitation and dwelling in the cities. Such is the case of the occupation and re-appropriation of the old textile industry Can Batlló in La Bordeta area in Barcelona (Cabré and Andrés 2018).

The continuous inability of the State and the municipality to put the urban renewal process of the old factory in action together with some announcements and plans of speculative exploitation and gentrification of the area led the neighborhood movement Recuperem Can Batlló, from june 2011, to occupy and take action on part of the industrial area with the objective of developing and managing it themselves. The open assembly of neighbors and local organizations led to the creation of work committees for every aspect

of the re-building process, establishing more than 35 ongoing projects the following years.

From Can Batlló's first occupation it was a collective demand of the occupant commoners to create an alive social space where various initiatives and cooperatives could flourish in its common ground. A collective housing resource could not stay apart from those demands.

La Borda housing cooperative initially started in 2012 as a result of three contextual factors (Cabré and Andrés 2018):

1. The ongoing housing crisis.
2. The emergence of the social economy.
3. The existence of a a strong neighborhood movement linked to Can Batlló and, furthermore, the necessity to develop long-term affordable housing.

Taking into account the traditional development of housing cooperativism, La Borda's promoter group designed their project based on previously successful international cooperative experiences. The tenure model is influenced by the Andel Model (which is also common in housing initiatives in Denmark, Uruguay, Sweden or Canada), a non-speculative system where the residents do not own or rent, but have the "grant of use" of housing, having to pay a monthly fee to the cooperative. The General Assembly is the main sovereign institution where the decisions are made. This model eliminates property speculation and profiteering on a fundamental right like housing.

La Borda's self-initiated, self-organized and non-speculative character reflects the urgent need of their inhabitants-commoners to readapt the way housing and common space are being produced and used (common spaces are meant to serve as meeting rooms for Can Batlló's neighborhood movement, which involves concern and participation of the community itself). It also gives response to the essential social need of affordable housing that, together with its de-commodified and self-organized elements, brings it upon as a promising housing common example (Cabré and Andrés 2018; Visković Rojs et al. 2020).

In La Borda's words: "one of the main values of La Borda and of the cooperative housing in grant of use in general is the community dimension also in the phase of conviviality, one more of the readings of our *we build housing to build community*" (La Borda 2019).

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La Borda is built on public property, but in 2015 it has reached a 75 year agreement with the municipality for its use (Brysch 2018).

Other main goals of La Borda are the creation and collective use of spaces and facilities with several common open green spaces in the area, and to share common spaces in between the building.

Although some contradictions and limitations should be mentioned, like the (yet) unstable legal framework, the limited access to financing and the significant amount of monthly contribution that every member has to pay (€450 for the average wage), the whole Can Battló area case shows us that in times of economic and housing crisis local collective actors such as neighborhood initiatives, urban movements and organizations can take action in the Lefebvrian concept of *right to the city* re-using and re-appropriating vacant unused spaces with the goal of creating a common space for collective and mutual ways of living.



Figure 3: La Borda's general assembly (laborda.coop/en)

FUCVAM (Uruguay)



Figure 4: FUCVAM housing cooperative of mutual help in Uruguay

Latin America has a long history of housing policies as well as housing struggles. There is a long heritage of housing cooperative and collective building practices, but also a legal and institutional background in applying property law and ownership patterns. Therefore, when it comes to housing ownership, the law establishes two possibilities: user and owner. *Ius utendi* is the right to use it; *ius fruendi* is the right to earn from the products that come from the property; and the *ius abutendi* is the right to dispose of the property. All these synthesize a property law framework which can be described as the right to use, enjoy and dispose of it within the social function and normative limits (Valadares and Cunha 2018).

FUCVAM (Federación Uruguaya de Cooperativas de Vivienda por Ayuda Mutua—Uruguayan Federation of Housing Cooperatives through Mutual Help) is a federation of housing cooperatives that extends throughout the country. From its foundation in 1970 until today, its base has consisted of members who are mainly industrial workers, unskilled workers, low-paid employees, unemployed and families in general who are entitled to social housing. Since its foundation up until today, more than 14,000 houses have

been built and already more than 6,000 new families are expecting the construction of their home through FUCVAM (Nahoum 2013).

While collaborative practices and a culture of mutual aid seem to be pervasive in both the rural and urban populations of Latin America (Stavrides 2019), FUCVAM's example presents a wealth of features that enhance both its sustainability and its effectiveness in time. These elements are mutual aid, the culture of cooperation, self-organization, horizontality, technical support and assistance at every stage of the federation, as well as what Nahoum (2013) calls "usufruct-use and enjoyment property system".

New members provide, through mutual assistance, the necessary material and intangible work at every stage of the construction of the house. They participate and decide through horizontal assemblies on all issues related to the design, construction and management of the house (with technical support and assistance from the Technical Assistance Institutes (Institutos de Asistencia Técnica—consisting of architects, surveyors, economists, etc.) and then decide together on the design on the open-common spaces between the residences as well as on issues related to their management.

Every house is owned by the federation, which prevents the commodification of real estate through its possible commercial exploitation by resident members, but gives the right of inheritance as well as the transfer to other new members. Although we are talking about an example of collective ownership (each house belongs to the cooperative), each member (family-resident) has the exclusive right to use and enjoy the residence they live in, as well as access to all common spaces of the built-up area (Stavrides 2019; Nahoum 2013).

FUCVAM, despite its financial dependence to a significant extent on State and welfare loans and grants, manages to prefigure—with its over fifty years of existence—urban commoning practices in all aspects of everyday life, enhancing the creation of communities of commoners within it (Stavrides 2019).

In addition, the strong connection with broader political and movemental demands is evident in FUCVAM's operation, as its existence within its politicized trade union members helped it survive the 13 years of dictatorship in Uruguay. Besides, they support political action against neoliberal policies together with solidarity actions (movement against evictions, movement against the gentrification of neighborhoods and the creation of slums, etc.).

The example of FUCVAM, although similar to this model of operation of housing cooperatives, reflects all the crucial aspects of urban and housing commoning (common resource, community and network of social relations-institutions) as well as participatory planning and self-building through mutual support and mutual assistance. In addition, it portrays all those aspects all over Uruguay, where the institutional and constitutional framework of the social function of property gives more ground for the initiative to flourish.

Conclusions

This paper tried to show the need of providing long-term affordable housing in times of housing crisis, inequalities and empty housing stock, through the lens of housing commons and the practices of the *right to the city* through urban commoning that emerge in cities all over the world. The resistance to neoliberal urban enclosures, evictions and gentrification that destroy urban social capital in neighborhoods is something that the communities of commoners show through their demands for broadening the values of a *right to the city* by enabling the use-value and re-appropriational aspects in vacant spaces and buildings of the urban terrain, as well as combining those bottom-up practices by articulating broader demands such as the adequate and affordable housing provision or the need for urban common spaces.

The context of urban commons as those developed around the issues of production and reproduction in modern cities was discussed through the collective use of common space, as well as through the creativity of their commoners, redefining the conditions of conception of the spatial environment of the cities. From this point of view, the concept of the common space created in the moments of urban commoning was explored as the threshold space that creates prospects for the expansion of commoning in the city. Furthermore, we researched how the housing commoning nexus can respond to the current economic crisis as well as the housing and housing stock crisis in particular, illustrating it with various successful housing commons cases around the globe.

In the wide and at times heterogeneous spectrum of housing alternatives, the cases researched in this paper pursue the goals of the housing commons seen as an institution of alternative housing provision, organized by a solid community of housing commoners, unified by the values of solidarity and the practices of commoning, pursuing de-commodified and self-organized housing.

Both La Borda housing cooperative in Barcelona and FUCVAM in Uruguay reflect our theoretical and interdisciplinary framework as we analyzed each one in different and complementary ways. Yet both pursue the goals of providing affordable housing through the lenses of the *right to the city*, urban commoning and ways of finding “cracks” in the legal framework in order to assure the longevity and prosperity of every project.

In recent times of housing crises, unfulfilled mortgages, evictions, vacant or idle housing resources, neoliberal enclosures through gentrification processes and real-estate short-term rental zoning, the role of neighborhood assemblies, initiatives and wider urban movements is crucial for merging the values of commoning in everyday life with the demands of adequate and affordable housing provision. Demands that can, here and now, improve our dwelling in the cities and metropolitan areas of the 21st century and reflect ways of respectful, inclusive and sustainable living through mutuality, solidarity and self-organization that the values of urban commoning proclaim. Furthermore, those prefigurative dimensions can be empowered and encouraged through the institutionalization of collective use-values or, as Balmer and Bernet (2015) state, “it’s a paradoxically appropriate strategy in “late liberal” capitalism for both municipalities and civil society actors to secure common resources effectively and sustainably making clever use of the property rights toolbox.”

Surely, there is a need (both theoretical and practical) for broadening the horizon of housing commoning and housing commons in order to establish a “common language of the commons” that answers to the needs of citizens in the post-modern societies.

Also, further research needs to explore whether the common language of housing commons lays beyond the regional and State disputes.

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