

# **GROWING BAD?**

International Symposium  
on Built Environment and Urban Design



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## **The Regional Sub-Urban Housing Challenge**

International Scientific Symposium on Built Environment and Urban Design

With Workshops on Housing for Urban Planners and Researchers

September 06-07, 2018

Handwerkskammer Aachen, Chamber of Crafts and Skilled Trades

Subsumption of all Session Topics

### Event Organisers

ILS – Research Institute for Regional and Urban Development Dortmund / Aachen  
RWTH Aachen University, Faculty of Architecture  
University of Luxembourg, Faculté des Lettres, des Sciences Humaines, des Arts et  
des Sciences de l'Éducation, IPSE

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## **The Main Topic of the Symposium**

The two-day scientific symposium will focus on regional housing markets under structural pressures and their implications on suburban development. The aim is to clarify links and interdependencies between the coordination and regional re-distribution of housing demand within the urban and suburban context of growing urban areas in industrialized countries. At the same time, it seeks to analytically grasp implications of diversifying functional requirements and forms of accommodation on housing within the existing suburban environment. By asking how to accommodate inhabitants within the competitive setting of urban-suburban settlement patterns, the focus will be on trends that break traditional rules and practices through innovative approaches in regional governance, land and housing estate management as well as urban design.

The first day, titled Understanding Housing in a Regional Suburban Context, is dedicated to theoretical and analytical grounding of general development strategies and practices for accommodating housing demand within the urban-suburban interrelations of local governments, private stakeholders and members of the public. The sessions will map the conceptual landscapes of the wide field of urban-suburban relationships in the regional context of housing, drawing from results of empirical research on pull-push factors such as land availability, demographic changes, market practices, organizational frameworks and stakeholders' roles. In addition, opportunities and challenges arising from digitalization and related new practices, and regional data analytic frameworks aimed at integrating multiple objectives and agendas will be discussed.

The second day, titled Materializing Housing Supply, will analyse real estate investments and their interrelation to the demand and supply gaps on one hand and the financial market framework vs. public subsidies on the other. It is dedicated to a critical review of housing concepts dealing with extensive land use and sprawl. The sessions will further draw attention to the post-suburban redevelopment and reutilization of existing residential and non-residential sites through densification, infill, and retrofitting of post-suburban business locations to meet the currently diversifying demands of the housing market.

The symposium language is English. Target groups include researchers on metropolitan urban development covering disciplines of regional governance, planning, urban design and data analysis and processing, who are working in the field of housing.

## **Session I: Between Rules and Practices of Utilizing Space for Sub-Urban Housing in Regional Context**

Recent approaches to suburbanisation and suburban areas are situated in a range of diverging perceptions, between critique and condemnation on the one hand, and appreciation or, at least, acceptance as part of the actually existing built environment on the other hand. However, apart from these often ideological battlegrounds, it seems clear that the manifold parts of urban areas that are considered to be sub-urban are i) simply a part of the built and sociological environment (so they deserve attention), are ii) also subject to change

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(as inner cities are), and iii) thus need perspectives for the future. Against this background, papers to be presented in this session may deal with one or more of the following issues:

- Tracking how the Suburbanisation, Suburbanism and Housing Nexus is being discussed
- Track the recent trajectories of land use, population, and economic development, commuting patterns, or selected other indicators in areas that one would consider to be sub-urban;
  - Address whether and to what extent 'suburbs' might provide relief to the rising housing shortage in major metropolitan areas
  - Explore the very sub-urban framework conditions, potentials and constraints of infill and densification strategies
  - Identify the dimension of 'community' in sub-urban realms
  - Investigate policies targeting the city-suburb relationship, neighbourhood or models of collaboration between these entities, including regional governance structures.

The underlying studies may consist of overviews using statistical data or mapping and GIS-analyses, carefully conducted case studies on sub-urban life worlds, comparative analyses across different regions, or discourse and policy studies. Their common focus might be to provide a better understanding of what's going on at the urban fringes, what the related problems are, and how one could or should deal with the sub-urban in present and future policies. The focus of the session is international; contributors may also feel invited to submit papers that deal with the not so usual suspects of suburbanisation studies, both topic- and area-wise.

## Session II: Analysing Data on Housing Demand and Supply

Urban planners and policy advisers rely on information on the supply and demand in order to develop long-term planning strategies in the housing sector. There are several aspects to consider:

- population development and forecasts, ideally addressing different age groups and other socio-demographic variables to accurately estimate specific housing preferences and affordability;
- detailed information on the existing housing stock in terms of physical attributes (construction year, housing type, energetic standards) and current utilization structure (household size, household type, rent vs. ownership, occupancy rates, income classes);
- information on infrastructure provision and required standards to model level of services and adjust them in line with building and urban planning codes (e.g. parking spaces, recreational areas, services, etc.);
- additional context information on a range of other aspects like environmental hazards (emissions, flooding, geology, etc.) and conservation (landscape protection, biotopes, bio-connectivity, fresh air corridors), also in the light of emerging new knowledge on changing requirements (e.g. climate change adaptation);
- regional, state and national urban planning strategies with binding and non-binding regulations (e.g. energy standards for new buildings; density regulations, etc.).

The available information is likely to differ in terms of the levels of observation and scales they are provided for, e.g. district plan zoning regulations, census tract or building block in-

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formation, neighbourhood data, geodata infrastructure and services as distinct objects, etc. On this background, expertise is needed in housing analysis from a range of disciplines that support urban planners, such as GIS analysts, urban statistics and socio-demographic data, environmental modelling, as well as related subjects. The challenges hereby are manifold: often, project teams do not have the capacity to collect data themselves. Instead, they rely on secondary data sources that need interpreting, transformation to uniform levels of analysis, data modelling to fill gaps, and other data manipulation techniques to make it fit the planning purpose. These processes can be difficult and complex and are subject to cost-benefit considerations.

In this context, this session is looking for examples of advanced and innovative approaches on techniques of housing supply and demand analysis and modelling from an international perspective. We welcome contributions on the topics mentioned above and related experience on data infrastructures and analysis techniques. Aspects of policy implications and evaluation procedures are also of interest.

## **Session III: Housing and Planning in Sustainable Post-Suburban Contexts**

The emergence of gaps between demands and supply of housing, the evolution of extensive sprawl and unsustainable land-use patterns, as well as the materialization of questionable built environments are three crucial aspects that planners must deal with in order to turn current situations of suburbs into opportunities for a better future. In this perspective, the lack of a good design able to create decent collective spaces, together with a weak coordination of private developments and investments are commonly perceived as the main trigger causes that gave rise to the challenging situations in suburban contexts. For all these reasons, what planners should do (and how) in these areas is a question that can no longer be avoided. Innovative understandings and proposals are therefore needed.

By taking into account the most recent policies and actions promoted internationally, the scope of this session is to reconsider the role that planning may play to ameliorate suburban environments. Generally speaking, planning is a concept that implies the intentional control of space and procedures by virtue of human mind and creativity as opposed to processes definable as emergent or unintentional. In other words, it is an activity through which planners seek to create a certain degree of social and spatial order otherwise unreachable without plans. This implies the capacity of planners to comprehend, forecast and then provide the necessary conditions that should meet the needs of current and future inhabitants. This session discusses this challenge by exploring the two following questions:

1. What role did planning play (or it didn't) in the production and evolution of housing in the suburbs?
2. What planning can actually do and what kind of interventions are more suitable to deal with suburban housing contexts?

This session is looking for advanced and innovative approaches and techniques that critically rediscuss the role of planning and sprawl in suburban areas with a focus on housing

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from an international perspective. Aspects of policy implications and evaluation procedures are of interest. Case studies and practical examples are also welcome.

## **Session IV: Role of Housing for Design after Decline in Re-Urbanising and Post-Suburban Contexts**

Both urban and suburban landscapes are undergoing significant differentiation in their development perspectives. While some areas are booming, in other which are declining obsolete spaces are created. Such are opening chances for new, innovative post-suburban and reurbanisation developments. Involvement of new housing types in such developments is the main concern of this session. Focusing on the refitting of urban and suburban spaces, the session asks:

- How existing settlements typologies and their physical settings are being changed under the pressure of globalization and marketization and what kind of new demands have been created in housing
- About the influence of globalization on the design of housing
- How to bring innovative design and planning into rebuilding declining suburban areas by for-suburbia-new housing typologies

Discussions can be developed from various angles such as re-editing of places in urban areas, redefinition of suburbs, relations between the market needs and the locality.

## **Session V: Diversification Perspectives in Mono-Structured Suburban Housing Morphologies**

This session focusses on both intentional and non-intentional processes as well as on strategies on diversification in the specific settings of mono-structured housing stock. Such includes the suburban detached housing areas, large social housing estates of the 20th century industrial era, as well as new towns and other mass tailored settlement morphologies. It seeks to explore following issues:

- Causes and backgrounds of regularities and irregularities in diversification processes, as well as their implications
- The inter-relations between the rigid materiality and the specific morphological typologies of the housing stock, the spatial settings or distribution and temporal characteristics of specific eras of settlement creation in the context of its subsequent change
- The role of community development and involvement in stock adjustment, both planned and spontaneous

The session presents empirically based and theoretically grounded approaches towards the diversification process of the built environment as a development perspective for mono-structural settlement settings. A specific focus is directed towards, but not limited to, the role of time and change agents, internal and external influences, path development, change in demands in local and regional contexts as an answer on global societal or economic changes, development strategies and their implications.