Columbia University
Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation
A4003: Core Studio III, Fall 2017, "States of Housing"

Studio Statement, Adam Frampton

<u>Part to whole</u>

The relationship between parts and the whole has been a preoccupation, and perhaps cliché, for architectural thinking from Alberti to Venturi. In housing, the issue is fundamental. Conventionally, rooms (bedrooms, kitchens, bathrooms, and living spaces) are aggregated into apartments, which are in turn aggregated into buildings. The production of housing requires the repetition (or differentiation) and efficient consolidation of individual units of living into a larger whole. As such, housing demands the architect take a position relative to the question of the parts versus the whole. To what extent are individual parts expressed, and to what extent can a legibility of the whole exist? More broadly, this question also concerns the relationship between the individual and the collective, domestic and public, interior and exterior, and neighborhood and city.

The studio will focus on housing for an aging population, a term that in fact encompasses a broad demographic. In New York City, and the Bronx in particular, there is a high demand for affordable housing options for seniors, and, one might argue, an absence of architectural experimentation and inventive models that anticipate the future of aging and the changing health, abilities, interests, and lives of elderly people. Elderly housing may consist of various formats, including independent to assisted living, housing with live-in nursing care, and other more specialized facilities for residents with dementia. Individual units resemble anything from more conventional apartments to dormitory, hotel or hospital rooms, where functions like bathrooms and kitchens may be shared, not unlike contemporary co-living experiments often aimed at millennials and younger populations.

The studio will ask students to design for residents at different points in their lifespan, either through different types of units (parts) or the flexible adaptation of individual units over time. Moreover, elderly residents are to be integrated into a broader community within the project, providing intergenerational interaction and/or units that might accommodate two or even three generations. As such, the parts may be highly varied. This implies projects must depart from the repetition and typical formulations of studio, one bedroom, two bedroom, three bedroom, etc. as the conventional "parts" of housing. Given this premise, what are the new parts and models of aggregation, and how can the whole be re-constructed?

Our section will analyze Mies van der Rohe and Ludwig Hilberseimer's Lafayette Park in Detroit. Completed in 1963 and consisting of single-story courthouses, two-story townhouses, and high-rise apartment towers, Lafayette Park combines a range of different housing types (parts) into a single ensemble (whole), held together by a landscape designed by Alfred Caldwell. At the same time, in Mies' architecture, the expression of individual apartments and complexities of interior space are suppressed from the exterior, subsuming its parts into an architectural whole. We will examine Lafayette Park as an integrated project that appears to either intensify or collapse oppositions of part to whole, architecture to urbanism, built to unbuilt, infrastructure to landscape, and suburb to city.

We will also examine readings and critiques of Lafayette Park, from Detlef Mertins, Charles Waldheim, Albert Pope, and Pier Vittorio Aureli to the "post-occupancy evaluation" of Natasha Chandani, Danielle Aubert, and Lana Cavar. Despite its origins in the displacement of the Black Bottom community, and turbulent context of Detroit since 1967, Lafayette Park has persisted as a rare success of "urban renewal" to create a mixed income, racially integrated, and politically empowered community. In this sense, our analysis of Lafayette Park may provide insight into the possibilities of recovering a Modernist architectural project, or a framework for urban housing to provide a broader social vision for the city.