

Columbia University  
Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation  
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States of Housing

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## Housing: The Commons

What do you believe comes first, the habit of sharing or a shared space?

For us, architects designing Housing in 2019, the shared space will come first. Our studio will anchor its process in the design and understanding of the shared spaces and the housing units that it enables.

We will consider the common elements. In Britain the term, Commonwealth is used to explain a community founded for its common good, and shared wellbeing.

Historically the term, **commonwealth**, comes from the Latin Roman, **res-publica**, which literally means, **res**>well and **publica**>public, or **well-public**, which then became, **republic**.

Res-publica, or public good, or commonwealth, denotes a principle where a group takes care of a common core of elements for the everyone's advantage.

**We will use the idea of commonwealth to determine the shared elements, public spaces, and rule-set benefits of our housing shared zones.**

Throughout evolution, whether we hunt, gather or code, humans have relied on each other's strength, talent, and expertise. Cities grow around shared spaces, from the streets to the Universities, sharing allows closer proximities and more opportunities for progress.

Now that sharing—cars, workspaces, living spaces, tools, childcare, elder care—is on the rise, what is at stake in terms of design? How can society maximize efficiency of resources while maintaining individuation and freedom of expression? How do we balance freedom with responsibility? **How can housing be made better, more beautiful, for more people?**

By **better**, we mean allowing more opportunity for expression, creativity, wellness, and a new kind of fluency. A fluency where each person can access what they need; and give back what they produce; where gender differences are attenuated, work and leisure have room, one does what one is best at, and things get done more efficiently and at a higher level than ever before.

Extreme inequality is understood as an obstacle in the advancement towards a more just and fluent society. While few have multiple, luxurious, unused homes, many more are homeless, suffering in the face of growing environmental extremes. Designing Housing that mends some of the disparities is our challenge.

Using a seminar format our housing studio will read *Winners Take All* by Anand Giridharadas, immerse itself in the polemics of the sharing economies and the struggles to level the playing field among giants like Uber, Amazon, Facebook, WeWork and Apple. We will move beyond the tower-in-the-park housing schemes; and propose new hybrids that negotiate landscapes, infrastructure and cultural contexts.

We will aim for high-density, low-rise, environmentally sound and sustainable development, with shared access to natural light, air and outdoor space. Our view is that sharing in housing, culture, sports and education offers many advantages, yet requires a clear understanding of the stakeholders' responsibilities.

Our studio will follow the States of Housing assignments, for the precedent analysis we will examine the **VM Housing**, by BIG/JDS, in Copenhagen, Denmark, 2008.

With 7 million inhabitants and 28 million visitors annually, New York constantly reinvents its housing stock. Through an ongoing discussion and team-based projects, we will aim to create housing that is **efficient**, and methodical, as architecture yet **beautifully** set in its urban context.