

## **AR-472: A User's Manual**

The course **AR-472 Swiss cooperative housing: A critical overview** examines the phenomenon of the collectively owned, not-for-profit cooperative housing which plays an important part in the Swiss residential sector. Once the main provider of working-class housing, the cooperative model has in recent decades enjoyed a great surge in popularity, as well as professional interest from the architectural community, following experimentations with sharing living typologies and grassroots activism. This overview in twelve lectures is critical inasmuch as it not only states various aspects of this overall positive phenomenon, but also identifies, probes and questions the pressures and tensions it creates: with co-existing state policies and market logics, with member and non-member citizens, and with the city. The first half of the course is chronological, looking at the emergence, development and transformation of housing cooperatives in Swiss cities, in particular Zurich, Geneva, Lausanne, and Berne, from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until today. The second half identifies six transversal themes that situate this local history within a wider continuity of discourses on collective living.

The course consists of weekly lectures, an essay and an oral exam. A non-curricular but connected extra component, which students are strongly expected to attend, is the series of four public panels **Housing the Commons**, taking place on selected Wednesday evenings between 18.00–19.30. Each of these lectures (dates in schedule) will explore a characteristic theme of housing commons, through discussions between host Irina Davidovici and several guests, both external and from EPFL. They will be announced separately.

The course module investigates the phenomenon of Swiss housing cooperatives in twelve lectures. The first six trace their history chronologically, from the emergence of cooperatives during the 19<sup>th</sup> century to today, and the last six thematically, through transversal topics such as collective interiors, thresholds and overlaps with the city, environmental agendas, etc. The critical aspect of the overview represents the invitation to probe deeper than an overwhelmingly positive assessment of cooperatives, to the more profound themes and tensions they articulate, for example between autonomy and urban integration, top-down patronage and bottom-up empowerment, idealism and pragmatism, collective interest and individual freedom.

### **Weekly lectures**

Each weekly two-hour slot will consist of a thematic lecture for one hour, followed by group and plenary discussions.

### **Group and plenary discussions**

Cooperatives are based on principles of cooperation and participation. They are created by people pooling up resources for the common good, in other words subordinating individual interest to collective interest (hence 'not for profit') In its structure, the course attempts to replicate the cooperative principles of participation and cooperation, by inviting students to participate and cooperate among themselves. To that end, they are expected to participate in the discussions following the lecturer's input. Organised in smaller groups in zoom breakaway rooms, they will have 10–15 minutes for a group discussion, whose outcome will be to formulate one question. This question should be related to the week's lecture, text, or the connections between them. The last 30 minutes of the session will be taken by a plenary discussion between lecturer and students, in which some of these questions, chosen at random, will be collectively debated.

## Readings

In preparation for each lecture, students will be required to read a relatively short and accessible text, thematically connected to the weekly topic, yet dealing with different historical and geographical contexts. Some of the texts provide information about the historical phenomenon of cooperatives in Switzerland; most of them however address perennial problems of global relevance, such as the housing question, the right to the city, social inclusion, as well as environmental, energy and economic crises. The students will be asked to reflect upon the general or theoretical aspects of these texts in connection to the economically, geographically and historically situated cases represented by the Swiss cooperatives in each lecture. In addition to the weekly readings, a set of more extensive readings will be made available as a general information resource for the written assignment and for the oral exam preparation. These further readings are optional.

## Recordings

Due to the Covid situation, the school regulations stipulate that lectures recordings be made available to students. The link to the recording will be displayed on Moodle after the lecture.

## Assessment

### Written assignment

The students are required to attend all classes and to work in teams to achieve their grades. The written component (40% of the grade, 1,000 words per person) will be undertaken collectively in groups of three, who will produce one 3,000-word essay in teamwork. The essay topics are left to their authors, however they must be approved by the lecturer via the intermediate hand-ins.

The essay will be argued and structured around the comparison of two case studies, one from the general history of housing and one from contemporary Swiss cooperative housing. Within each essay-writing team, there will be clearly defined roles for each member. The first person will be tasked with writing the historical case study, the second the contemporary case study, and the third with their comparison. As the essays are collaborative, all three authors will receive the same grade, which will count as 40% of the aggregate final grade.

### Intermediate and final hand-ins

The essay production will be structured by two intermediate hand-ins, collectively produced by each team of three:

#### March 24: Abstract

200-300 word summary stating the essay's topic and naming the two case study projects.

#### April 21: Structure

An extended table of contents that clearly describes the structure of the argument.

The hand-ins are ungraded yet compulsory, and failure to submit will affect the way the final essay grade. Individual feedback to both intermediate hand-ins will only be provided in critical cases where corrections are necessary.

**June 11: Final submission of the completed 3,000 word essay**, illustrated and referenced.

**All hand-ins, intermediate and final, will be on Moodle. Essays sent by email will not be considered as submissions.**

### **The oral exam and grading**

The oral examinations will be conducted as 30-minute discussion between the lecturer and the three authors of each essay. They will consist of a brief discussion of the essay and general knowledge questions.

While the essay grades will be shared equally, the grades given in the oral exam will be separately given, depending upon individual performance. The grades for the oral exam will count for 60% of the final grade.