

Phd Programme Architecture and Design Cultures

SEMINAR

# 1919 Red Vienna – 2020 Red Berlin? Rent Policies, Migration and Social Housing

curated by  
Jacopo Galimberti, Andrea Borsari and Annalisa Trentin

1<sup>st</sup> December  
02.00 - 07.00 pm

Teams Platform

The seminar will be online and access will be made available via Teams. The relevant **link** will be provided **upon request**. Please contact: [jacopo.galimberti@unibo.it](mailto:jacopo.galimberti@unibo.it)



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM  
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA  
DIPARTIMENTO DI ARCHITETTURA  
DIPARTIMENTO DI ECCELLENZA MIUR  
(L. 232 DEL 1/12/2016)

# 1919 Red Vienna – 2020 Red Berlin? Rent Policies, Migration and Social Housing

A seminar organised as part of the teaching of History and aesthetic of industrial products for the degree course in Design of the Department of Architecture – Unibo, in collaboration with the PhD Programme “Architecture and Design Cultures” (University of Bologna) and the Collège international de philosophie (Paris).

Organisers:

**Dr. Jacopo Galimberti** (University of Bologna, Collège international de philosophie),  
**Prof. Andrea Borsari** (University of Bologna),  
**Prof. Annalisa Trentin** (University of Bologna)

The past three decades have witnessed skyrocketing rent prices in many European capital cities. Long the locus of class divides but also of social mobility, some metropolises now seem poised to become dystopian places, unaffordable even for the middle classes. This shift has been particularly severe and rapid in Berlin. Because of the city’s unique historical circumstances, the cost of rent in the German capital had remained well below that of comparable European metropolises. Yet the situation has dramatically changed in the past 10 years; rent payments have doubled, generating manifold social problems and unprecedented protests. In January 2020, the Senate of Berlin passed a law, popularly called *Mietendeckel*, that freezes current rent prices for five years in an attempt to limit the negative consequences of gentrification. The constitutionality of this rent cap has been challenged in court, and the final verdict is due in November 2020. Regardless of the constitutional court’s decision, we would like to examine this law, its political meaning, potential viability in other contexts, and the historical precedent that has been foregrounded as an exemplar by some of its proponents, “Red Vienna”, a programme of municipal socialism that was embraced by the city of Vienna from 1919 until the ban of the Socialist Party in 1934.

*Mietendeckel* has been the result of the joint effort of massive protests, grassroots militance and official politics. In particular, a far-left group called the Interventionistische Linke (IL) has played a crucial role in the law’s promotion. One of its militants will be with us in Bologna to present the debates that resulted in the creation of this law, the rationale behind it and the significance of Red Vienna for the campaign. An international group of four scholars who have explored architecture and social housing in Vienna, Berlin and Bologna will join the debate, problematising this comparison, highlighting similarities and differences, and discussing social housing projects, as well as their attendant rent policies, that have shaped areas of Berlin.



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02.00-02.15 p.m.

**Welcome speech and opening remarks**

Jacopo Galimberti

(Department of Architecture - Unibo and Collège international de philosophie)

02.15-02.45

**Das Rote Berlin. Expropriations and Rent Caps for Affordable Housing.**

Matthias Clausen

(Kotti & Co.)

This presentation will discuss the current housing crisis in Berlin and several attempts to solve it. In particular, it focuses on the campaign “Deutsche Wohnen & Co. enteignen” (expropriate Deutsche Wohnen & Co.), which has promoted both a referendum on the expropriation of landlords owning more than 2000 flats in Berlin, and a rent cap, the *Mietendeckel*, which the Berlin Senate has approved and used to hinder the exponential increase of rents in the city. I will also provide an overview of the initiatives of Kotti & Co. and the strategies put in place by the Interventionistische Linke (IL), an anti-capitalist organisation that has published the brochure *Das Rote Berlin* and delineated sustainable, not market-oriented, solutions to solve the housing crisis affecting several German cities.

02.45-03.15

**The Surplus Value of Public Housing.**  
Esra Akcan  
(Cornell University)

West Berlin's Kreuzberg district was regarded as a "German Harlem" before its urban renewal in the 1980s. This was one of the most important architectural events of its time and a microcosm of international architectural debates from the mid-1960s till the early 1990s. Due to the public housing status given to the buildings during this urban renewal, Kreuzberg avoided gentrification until recently, unlike the adjacent neighbourhoods such as Mitte and Prenzlauer Berg that became expensive instantly after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Today, many immigrants rightfully take credit for Kreuzberg's urban renewal and its symbolic significance in the global imagination by pointing out their own financial and cultural contributions in making the area one of the most cosmopolitan, creative, and politically engaged places to live in the world. Recently, Berlin has been turning from a city that was accessible to people with little means, including immigrants, refugees, students, artists, artisans, authors, and intellectuals, into a city whose authorities aspire to make it attractive to multinational investors. The success of Kreuzberg's urban renewal is now pushing out the people who rebuilt it.

03.15-04.15

**Red Vienna and Berlin Today: A Problematic Comparison.**  
Marco Pogacnik,  
Università IUAV di Venezia

The attractiveness of a city does not only depend on the job opportunities it offers, but also on its ability to provide adequate accommodation and high-standard services. Responding to the global competition among cities by acting on a single factor, e.g., the price of rent, could be useful as a temporary solution. However, it may prove insufficient in the face of a growing demand not only for accommodation, but also for urban spaces where living conditions meet the highest standard in terms of architecture, urban planning and, not least, social relations. Accommodation is an asset that must be offered with an idea of "city" in mind. We can talk about Red Vienna and hope for a Red Berlin, but we should remember that winning a political battle by offering cheap accommodation has never been a safe political investment. The use of rental caps (*Mietendeckel*) must be accompanied by the public acquisition of building land, by the involvement of a plurality of actors (private and public), as well by a rigorous control of the urban and architectural quality of the housing stock. Therefore, a parallel between the experience of Red Vienna and that of Berlin today can be drawn, but it ought to avoid simplifications, and it should attempt to valorise the utmost complexity of historical events.

04.15-04.45

### **Radical Democratic Housing Politics as Red Vienna's Critical Legacy**

Gabu Heindl,

Architectural Association School of Architecture, London, Architect/Author, Vienna.

Fostered by its 2019 centennial, its historical urbanist and housing strategies as well as those of Vienna's current administration are today often cited as a model case in social housing – and when it comes to putting a lid on the capitalization/privatization of urban space. It is ironic that Vienna's ongoing measures to keep rents somewhat affordable are perceived as almost utopian and radical elsewhere (e.g., in debates in Berlin, London, Vancouver). Could it be that the anti-utopianism that Manfredo Tafuri, in writing about 1920s Red Vienna, once attacked has now taken the structural position of Utopia? A politics of history dealing with Red Vienna has to "critically inherit" from it by highlighting unrealized futures hidden in that political project. Instead of simply transferring what was *once* present into *our* present, this approach clings also to moments and ideas that were never present, in the sense of realized or hegemonic, in Red Vienna. It clings especially to the dispersed articulations of popular self-empowerment and egalitarian universalism running counter to the paternalism and anti-migrant selectivism manifesting themselves in Vienna's Social Democratic housing policies then and now. My lecture examines contemporary housing and planning politics in Vienna based on this critical review of past Red Vienna's promises, reading them as to be actualized in potential futures. The aim is to contribute to the struggles for rights to housing and to the city.

04.45-05.15

### **A Thousand Homes for Bologna**

Valentina Orioli,

Universtà di Bologna and Vice Mayor of Bologna

This presentation articulates a reflection on housing in Bologna that relies on the surveys, experiences, and policies that have been developed during the administration that is now coming to an end (2016-2021). The housing question posed here is intended, in a broad sense, to address the issue of an "unresolved or not completely satisfied demand for a house." My paper discusses the issue of the social housing offer not only in the traditional sense, but also in terms of a diverse mix of housing solutions that reflect the complex social and economic reality of the city. By delineating the socio-demographic context that has emerged in the surveys conducted during this administration (such as the *Public inquiry on housing deprivation* and the *Housing BO* laboratory on students' dwellings), my presentation will highlight the evolutionary trends of the housing market in Bologna. It will focus, in particular, on the way

in which the theme of the house specifically - and those of habitability and inclusion more generally - has been translated into policies and regulations in the new General Urban Plan of the Municipality of Bologna.

05.15-06.30

**DISCUSSION**

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### **Bibliography:**

Gabu Heindl, *Radical Democracy in Architecture and Urban Planning* (Vienna: Mandelbaum Verlag, 2020).

Esra Akcan, *Open architecture: Migration, Citizenship, and the Urban Renewal of Berlin-Kreuzberg by IBA-1984/87* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2018).

Eve Blau, *Rotes Wien: Architektur 1919-1934: Stadt - Raum – Politik* (Vienna: Ambra!, 2014).

Manfredo Tafuri, *Vienna Rossa: la politica residenziale nella Vienna socialista* (Milan: Electa, 1980).

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