

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON HOUSING



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HOUSING IN DEVELOPMENT : POLICIES, INSTITUTIONS AND
FORMS OF COOPERATION

This paper is dedicated in memory of Ms. Zinat Devji

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1. Introductory concepts

In this introduction some concepts are clarified, and viewpoints expressed, focusing on what people do together and why and how they do this in order to conceptualize, plan, build, regulate, use, maintain or destroy their built environment in general and their housing in particular.

More specifically we will look at complex housing realities from the point of view of institutional or cooperative arrangements, actors and their ideas and actions in housing.

We will focus on e.g.

- decision-making and control
- policies, rules and regulations; customs, preferences and habits
- cooperation and exchange; conflicts and competition.

As a matter of convention we have labeled more established or structured ways of shaping housing environments as institutions, and ad hoc or occasional ways as 'forms of cooperation' in housing (see fig.1).

Although issues related to institutional aspects of housing are, and have been for a few years somewhat more fashionable, together with e.g. resources aspects (land, material, etc.) and certainly more fashionable at present than architectural aspects, we will argue that a rather narrow view of housing institutions is prevailing and, moreover that many proposals related to institutional aspects have underlying ideological and developmental viewpoints which are a matter of debate, to say at least, if not a matter of serious doubt as to their relevance in various contexts.

What people do together and how they do this in shaping their housing environments involves a great variety of actors and actions operating on a variety of scale levels and shaping a wide range of differing housing environments (fig.2). These housing environments (as any physical environment) are not only results but also starting points for human actions. Indeed, we shape buildings and buildings shape us!

In principle any combination of actors, actions and housing environments is possible, and in specific contexts one can identify a great number of combinations; an individual can plan a whole city or a family can build its own house.

We will call a particular combination of actors their actions and housing environments, a housing arrangement or (if sufficiently common) a housing (sub)system. (fig 3)

Such housing arrangements or systems can be further labeled depending on major sets of actors, sets of actions or sets of housing environments.

One can for example distinguish the state, the market or the community as major actors with more formal or more informal ways of shaping housing environments (fig. 4)

We will develop our basic argument in more detail, stressing among others, the necessity for a better understanding and appreciation of the functioning of various actors and actions, systems and subsystems