



OBSOLESCENCE and RENOVATION

20th Century Housing in the New Millennium

Conference: 14-15 December 2015

Abstract / Initial Proposal Form:

1. Paper / Proposal Title: _Inside/outside, beyond the “dis-enclaving” the enclave discourse. An urban design proposal based on the ethnography of a social housing complexe.

2. Format: _Written paper___

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6. Abstract (300 words): _____

From a positive resource that begins by salubriously accommodating workers near mines and industries, social housing complexes in Charlerloi (BE) have today rather

become places that assemble the “excluded”. This particularity adds additional complexity to the specific environmental, architectural and urban conditions that mass social housing estates already have.

One can wonder, whether within the social setting of a post industrial city, the modernist social housing complexes of the mid 20th century can break free from an enduring stigmatization and become sites for socio-spatial intensification and the drivers of alternative development scenarios?

Modernist social housing was by definition intended as a social inclusion tool, but today they have become agents of spatial and social exclusion. The socio-economical question (unemployment, education, health...) becomes also a spatial question and vice versa.

Observation learned that the spatial context of housing has a negative impact on the participation in the neighborhood: the resemblance, the other being the mirror of oneself and the proximity and the “promiscuity” (lack of privacy) of modernist social housing, isolate instead of gather. To what extent does then, the eternal discussion on mixity, diversity and “citizen involvement” fit the current social housing condition?

How can the high-rise social housing estates recovery be elaborated beyond the discourses of ‘dis-enclaving’ the enclave, of refurbishing architecture as to achieve sustainable building envelopes, of demolishing un-manageable density of precariousness, thereby destroying the last personal links or collective identity?

The paper will present a specific interdisciplinary case study in Charleroi that combines perspectives from urbanism and ethnography. The paper will develop urban design proposals/strategies that are substantiated by the realities and social logics that were uncovered through observant participation. This allows at least to develop a view on large-scale modernist social housing beyond stereotypes and to give some suggestions to deal with the discovered problematics.

7. Author(s) Biography (200 words maximum for all authors): _____

Jeanne Mosseray trained as an anthropologist at UCLouvain (Belgium), where she dedicated her research on socio-urban issues between immigration and European cities. She pursued studies in Urbanism and Strategic Spatial Planning at KU Leuven (Belgium) where she refined her questioning on urban logics and grasped, surrounded by architects, the urban design strategy approach and graduated as an urbanist. She is today practicing as an “urbanist-anthropologist” in an urban design office and is part-time assistant teacher at KU Leuven leading students through concept analysis studio in

the faculty of urbanism. She tried in her everyday practice to bring together both perspectives: social science and urban design.

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