

La Coopérative de La Fontaine du Bac

Presentation

In search of the territory's inherent resources

> Rethinking housing from the perspective of self-determination

The ambitions of European 18 present us with an opportunity to propose a project methodology that seeks to embrace a profound change in the existing housing system, for the benefit of social and environmental justice, and the self-determination of its inhabitants. As a global community, we are faced with a choice. Do we want this transition to be a source of prosperity and international solidarity, or a synonym for humanity and hierarchical social friction?

We choose to make a decision, firstly to avoid reducing the complex phenomena of the emergency to their simplest components (where housing and land are destined to be reduced to capital goods, where the construction economy destroys the territory) but above all to avoid considering the latter as more fundamental than the phenomena observable in a neighborhood. It is a question of embracing the complexity of the world that constitutes it and of entering into resistance through collective action.

> Building the power to act collectively

To achieve this, this project will involve the creation of a team of diverse permanent staff (mediator, architect, landscaper) who will work with all stakeholders in the neighborhood (residents, landlords, the city, etc.) to establish common strategies and conduct various investigation, mediation, and communication initiatives aimed at moving toward self-management of the area by residents. "Participation is collaborative and co-creative rather than extractive." Spanish architect and public health doctor Daniel Millor Vela reports that preparing the beneficiaries of a participatory project is crucial to its success. He considers it essential to ensure access to information and opportunities for the project through regular, localized outreach sessions. At the heart of the participatory project's mission is an unwavering commitment to democratizing knowledge and empowering potential project leaders. It is about recognizing the transformative power of sharing ideas and resources, like a comprehensive toolbox that facilitates home maintenance and improvement. A comprehensive knowledge-sharing toolbox allows individuals to navigate the complexities of project implementation with confidence and clarity. Building on existing toolboxes, in essence, symbolizes more than a repository and embodies the portability, organization, and accessibility of the actions implemented.

We wish to deploy architectural elements that aim to support individuals with collective motivation, so that, through desire and individual action, they are able to influence their environment, to bring about changes at the community level for their neighborhood life. To do this, we draw on our respective experiences (in particular participation in collective actions, in European research aimed at building toolboxes through the analysis of various participatory housing projects implemented in Europe (PASI Participatory Action for Social Inclusion, 2021; MERGING housing for integration across Europe: feasibilities & implementations, 2024). These changes must be based on the existing (its spaces, its actors, its architectures) for a situated practice.



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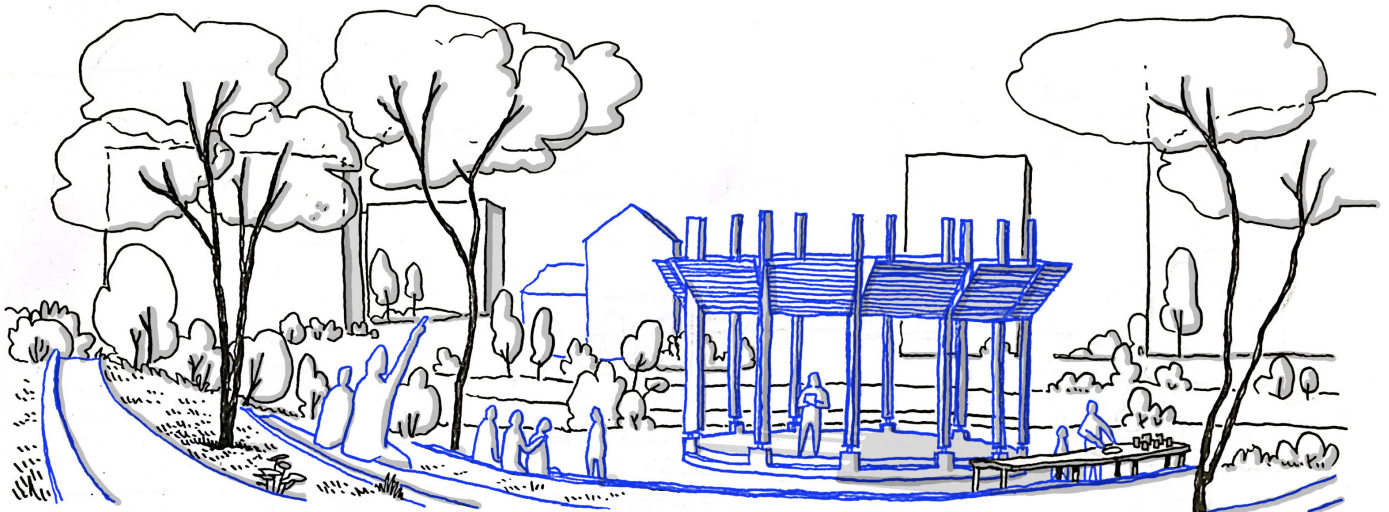
Mapping stakeholders at the national, regional, departmental, and metropolitan levels

> Dealing with a diversity of stakeholders

This work of transforming roles and stakeholders within the Fontaine du Bac must establish its various stakeholders and resource persons. To identify the stakeholders and propose an organization of the Fontaine du Bac ecosystem, we draw on Czischke's (2018) matrix, which classifies stakeholders in collaborative housing projects into three layers: 1) local stakeholders (who exert significant influence at the local level by knowing their immediate environment and controlling key resources); 2) regional stakeholders (who facilitate access to housing at their level); and 3) national stakeholders (who operate at the national or regional level, often having an indirect impact on access to housing). In this matrix, six types of actors can be identified: professional actors mandated by the government, professional actors operating without an official mandate, faith-based associations, civil initiatives, professional activists, and other types of actors. Based on this conceptual and methodological framework, we seek to map the involvement of existing actors (public, private, and mixed) in the projects we propose to build.

> Mapping to Identify Resources

As architects and geographers Aikaterini Anastasiou, Nele Aernouts, Viviana d'Auria, and Michael Ryckewaert demonstrate through their October 2024 ethnographic study of multi-stakeholder housing to address vulnerabilities at the personal and local levels, this mapping provides a solid foundation for generating a housing project where stakeholder strategies, along with the embedded tactics of workers and residents, operate within a cooperative continuum. In this interpretation, the "Re-sourcer" project is a potential mechanism for supporting residents' vulnerabilities related to the housing crisis. First, multi-stakeholder collaboration enables the intelligent mobilization of resources, such as access to housing stock and financing. Furthermore, the project's organizational and spatial configuration also addresses residents' right to housing by providing new, affordable, and high-quality housing with additional space that residents would have struggled to occupy alone. This approach could be based on an ethnographic survey, based on the participant survey to capture the daily dynamics of residents, which could bring out intertwined vulnerabilities resulting from the conjunction between individual fragilities (financial insecurity, instability) and environmental fragilities (social exclusion, geographical isolation) and part of a general relationship to the neighborhood. This will give rise to the design of local, situated tactics, adapted to the Fontaine du Bac, implemented by the different actors and mainly by the residents.



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Future Prospects for the Neighborhood

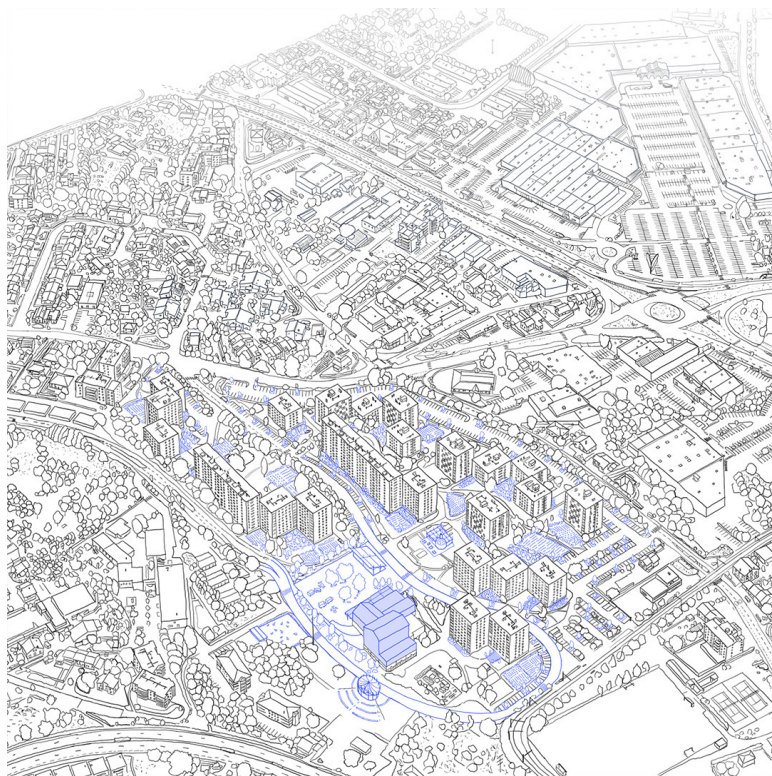
Towards Gradual Empowerment

> Initiating a Measured and Sensitive Change

It is therefore on this basis and informed by the analysis of resident and neighborhood dynamics that we propose to implement a radical, yet gradual, change in the issue of housing by making La Fontaine du Bac a testing ground for the rental management of tomorrow. Ultimately, this experiment aims to:

Create a housing cooperative leading to a rethinking of the position of the various stakeholders in the area. This tool must empower the issue of housing at the resident level, so that they become fully involved in the management of both rental properties and common areas, as well as their maintenance, development, and activities.

Enable a change in the responsibilities of the landlord, who must ultimately participate in empowering residents in the management of their neighborhood. This involves various stages of workshops and training, with management initially shared and then fully delegated to residents of their living spaces. The aim is for the landlord to be able to spread this principle to other locations in its real estate portfolio to create a constellation of self-managed spaces and to be able to concentrate on the construction of new operations and their management if the conditions are not met to spread this model there.



> Towards Self-Determination: A Proposed Process

This project, a largely long-term process formalized by the ongoing work of the community, cannot result in a detailed and definitive scenario. Therefore, the stakeholder mapping, data analysis to understand resident dynamics, the desire to create the conditions for resident self-determination, and the transformation of the landlord's role into a cooperative swarmer, lay the foundations for a long-term project, the direction of which will be determined as the community becomes more permanent. The latter must transform light and fleeting experiments, based on the will of residents and neighborhood stakeholders, into a broader project in which the various stakeholders will truly play an active role. The framework and resources are being developed collaboratively and over the long term. Attached is a brief timeline of the project, with the first 12 months providing a clear direction. The rest of the project outlines the transformation of the neighborhood and its structures, accompanied by fictitious examples.

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T + 6 months

Establishment of a permanent office for the team within the neighborhood. Contact with various stakeholders, conduct of surveys, inhabited surveys, etc. Initial construction of an architectural project to create an outdoor meeting and discussion space, a sort of project center/agora that can be used on a daily basis or during festive events, for example, as a stage. This initial project will be co-designed and built with volunteer residents to strengthen contact, build relationships, and discuss their needs, desires, and uses with the various stakeholders.

T + 12 months

Development of an urban process scenario for a long-term transformation project of common spaces and housing, including residents as users and decision-making bodies. Different governance scenarios are being explored, giving varying degrees of input to residents or the landlord. A co-managed structure between the residents' association and the landlord is being established to work together on the management and development of green spaces. Various workshops and training sessions are offered to participants in this new structure. Assemblia members are trained in mediation and knowledge sharing.

T + 18 months

Following a workshop with a landscaper and an ecologist, an initial participatory project to rework the thresholds and surroundings of the buildings was undertaken in the early days of the organization's existence. After a year of understanding the annual maintenance of the spaces and carrying out small beautification and de-artificialization projects, the organization decided to welcome sheep to maintain the green spaces and rented out various plots to a market gardening association. This activity, coupled with intense weather events and the desire to restore the neighborhood's water identity, led to major landscaping work to create various rain gardens. The creation of a network of swales and multi-layered hedges redefines the spaces and contributes to improving the climatic comfort of the area.

T + 36 months

Following various workshops and training sessions, a residents' cooperative was established based on the model of the organization responsible for outdoor spaces. Co-managed with the lessor, it initially manages the common areas of the different buildings and is working on a restructuring of the ground floors in order to accommodate various shared facilities across each building (washing machines, community kitchen area, shared guest room, bicycle storage, etc.).

T + 48 months

The housing cooperative merges with the organization responsible for outdoor spaces, expanding its scope of action and now managing the entire rental portfolio. The cooperative operates through a work mission and a monthly general meeting, and is supported by external experts for skills it does not possess. Residents actively participate; some are employed by other volunteers within the organization. Various thematic workshops are held to raise awareness and train residents and strengthen their sense of belonging to the community. Assemblia withdraws from management to spread the model to other projects/neighborhoods.

T + 60 months

The cooperative now operates on a self-managed basis; it has been able to train and employ various community members who manage the daily operation of the common areas and rentals. Its members organize and ensure the proper conduct of general meetings, the establishment of community workshops on the issue of housing, and have been able to undertake various works within the neighborhood such as the planting of parking spaces, the diversion of the eponymous street in favor of the creation of a central square. The social center and the former supermarket have been raised to accommodate the premises of the cooperative, shared workshop spaces, work for micro-enterprises, etc.