

LEGO-Urbanism and the housing crisis

Exploring modular and prefabricated housing in Europe

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Project description

Driven by interlocking housing and climate crises, European cities turn to prefabricated, modular, and relocatable housing to bypass formal planning processes and land constraints. The physical disaggregation of the house and home, a paradigm conceptualized as LEGO-Urbanism (Bossuyt et al., 2026), transforms urban landscapes. Despite the proliferation of new housing construction technologies, there is a blind spot in how we understand them. Housing studies overlooks the actual production and materiality of housing, while planners have not yet fully grappled with the socio-spatial implications of temporary, modular structures. Specifically, we lack clarity on how new construction technologies interact with urban governance, property relations, and the lived experience of urban citizens.

This BMA project builds on ongoing work regarding the relationship between spatial planning and technological change in housing provision. It builds on an existing network of industry stakeholders within this field.

To ensure the project aligns with your strengths, your 320 hours will consist of a core foundational task, combined with different options tailored to your skillset. One task is to conduct a literature review on this topic. The specialized task consists out of one of the following tasks depending on interest and skillset of the candidate

1. Conduct desktop research to map the residential construction sectors and business models across a few selected international contexts.
2. Organize and support interviews and site visits with key institutional stakeholders in the sector.
3. Help prepare a public event with industry stakeholders

Job requirements

You are encouraged to apply if you have an interest in housing, urban studies, or spatial planning, and enjoy synthesizing literature and doing independent research, as well as have excellent English writing and communication skills. Familiarity with urban studies, spatial planning, property theory, or political economy literature is a strong plus, but a willingness to learn is most important. Other language skills are also a plus.

Bibliography

- Bossuyt, D., Friendly, A., van Noorloos, F., & van Zevenbergen, M. (2026). The informal governance of LEGO urbanism: Temporary housing in the Netherlands. *Urban Studies*, 1–19.

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- Bossuyt, D., & Debrunner, G. (2026). Flexible planning and the institutionalization of housing precarity: Temporary housing in the Netherlands and Switzerland. In A. Friendly & A. Pimentel Walker (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of precarious housing*. Routledge.
- Moreno Zacarés, J. (2024). "Residential Accumulation: A Political Economy Framework." *Housing, Theory and Society*, 41(1), 4-26.