



Archiving the housing conjunctionure

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It seems clear that the archive is primarily the product of a judgement, the result of the exercise of a specific power and authority, which involves placing certain documents in an archive at the same time as others are discarded. [...] The archive is, therefore, not a piece of data, but a status.

Mbembe, 2002, p.20

Archiving conjunctionures

We write this editorial as we move into the final days of 2024, where it is clear that the preceding months have continued to exacerbate crises of housing, home, displacement, dispossession, and other state-sanctioned forms of violence and premature death. From Palestine, to the treatment of campus encampments, to the renewed criminalization of homelessness, poverty, and migration, and the ongoing, uneven, and not-yet-fully understood impacts of COVID-19: the crises continue and so too do the impacts on people's access to safe, secure, affordable, and stable housing and homes. Racial capitalism is both cyclical and creative: relying on a permanent, normalized crisis, while inventing new tools of displacement and dispossession. We see this in the financialization of housing, where these tools expedite the global circulation of capital and production of profit, whether through digital technologies or other infrastructures. Displacement and dispossession also occur through the erasure of histories, lives lived, belongings, and homes, employing intentional strategies to not only forcibly remove people from place but to make it seem as though they were never there. As housing movements continue to organize against pervasive crises, we

find ourselves reflecting on the role and practice of archive-making in our imaginaries for just housing futures.

Our situated moments of crises are helpfully understood through conjunctural analysis. Following Stuart Hall and Doreen Massey, ‘a conjuncture is a period when different social, political, economic and ideological contradictions that are at work in society and have given it a specific and distinctive shape come together, producing a crisis of some kind’ (Hall & Massey, 2010, p. 55). Interpreting the ongoing and lasting crises through the lens of conjuncture can help us to understand housing, dispossession, war, or opioid crisis as distinct as well as intersecting and embedded within one another. Further, conjunctural analysis is about naming the moment (Ultra Red Journal, 2024). To the authors, naming this conjunctural moment in radical housing struggles is thus a method to collectively analyze and interpret the current political, economic, and social conditions, not for the sake of the analysis itself, but to inform strategies for action. If we are to understand this polycrisis as a conjuncture, then, what is the role of the archive? Is there one?

In our previous editorials, we offered some documentation of these conjunctures. While historically our editorials posit an introductory framing for the journal issue, they also inadvertently create a snapshot of a moment in time. This documentation, or archiving, encourages us to reflect on the role and value of archives in radical housing organizing and in imagining housing futures. We suggest that radical housing archiving is a valuable practice of collective storytelling: that historicizes the present, memorializes the past, and provides openings for the future. This practice is a radical intervention to keep close stories and histories in moments of intentional, intimate destruction of people’s lives, belongings, and shared knowledge. Radical housing archives are not only a source of shared knowledge, but also a reclaiming of power, belonging, who and what gets to be remembered and how. These archives are more than textual, also found in art, poetry, photos, our embodied experiences, and in our relationships with each other. Following these waypoints, the practice of radical housing archiving is an act of radical care. Hobart and Kneese (2020, p. 2) conceptualize radical care as a ‘set of vital but underappreciated strategies for enduring precarious worlds.’ Radical housing archiving is a collective intervention strategy in immediate housing crises while also caring for the potential of radical housing futures. In what follows, we situate the archive while considering the possibilities of archiving practices in housing movements as a radical care act.

The archival turn

In considering the role of the archive for radical housing futures and housing justice organizing, we are guided by the longstanding, important approaches that scholars of history, coloniality, empire, gender, sexuality, race, and more have written about extensively (Mbembe, 2002; Carter, 2006; Arondekar, 2009; Cifor & Wood, 2017; Manoff, 2004; Taylor, 2003). Many, for instance, have long noted the affective desires that quests for archival knowledge imbue and cautioned against the all-too-easy Enlightenment-informed presumption that archives are complete, insular repositories of truth (Arondekar, 2023;

Foucault, 2008; Lowe, 2015). Indeed, it is easy enough to imagine that by uncovering lost information hidden in the supposedly all-encompassing and authoritative archive, one might find their way through hidden worlds buried by years gone by and thus find their way home. Jacques Derrida (1996) famously describes this quest as a form of ‘archive fever,’ or a condition marked by a vehement desire to uncover lost knowledge. To be plagued by archival fever is ‘to burn with a passion. It is never to rest, interminably, from searching for the archive right where it slips away. It is to run after the archive. (...) It is to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement’ (1996, p. 91). This nostalgia for a hidden truth lost can haunt a person, or perhaps a movement, and can stoke obsessive quests. Some may come to believe that without this lost knowledge, the future is impossible. ‘As much and more than a thing of the past,’ Derrida writes, ‘before such a thing, the archive should call into question the coming of the future (...) it is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow’ (ibid., p. 34-36). Through this feverish quest, a just housing future becomes deferred, predicated upon uncovering a just housing past to return to. But what if there is no there there, or perhaps no there then?

Of course, in contexts of dispossession, violence, and genocide, it becomes hard to maintain access to the archives that we live amidst. When homes are bombed, family lines wiped out, and schools and libraries erased amidst the attempted erasure of entire peoples, most notably Palestinians, loss is palpably real. Even amidst contexts of urban gentrification, eviction crises, and homeless sweeps in Global North cities, people lose their belongings, photographs, documents, and archives of life and community. Housing and land justice movements rising to meet colonial and capitalist violence often end up working around the clock to reduce harm and create lifelines of support—often lacking the resources to intentionally archive their work or all that gets lost around them. As Fiadh Tubridy writes, ‘the history of housing and community struggles is generally poorly recorded for various reasons, including that housing movements often do not take on a lasting institutional form and lack the infrastructure to record their own history, and that they do not accord with popular narratives and ways of understanding history that focus on the role and agency of elites’ (2024, p. 1030). And yet, subversive, radical, and oftentimes messy archival work does ensue—sometimes in the cracks and crevices of official state archives, but more often than not, in community organizing spaces, in correspondences between activists, in oral history repositories, and in digital and analog traces alike left behind and at times preserved in the ruins of dispossession.

Patterns of archiving

Even as we consider the possibilities for radical housing archiving, it must be recognized that archives have long been state tools of erasure and exclusion. Archives have traditionally been viewed as centers of power, where authority is exercised through the selection, categorization, and preservation of resources that shape historical narratives. As places where the construction of history begins, they have long been key to civic, national, and colonial

projects, establishing authoritative forms of memory that define identities and futures within a particular territory (Burgum, 2022; Foucault, 2008). However, this authority is inherently selective, often excluding and marginalizing historical records. Archiving is a complex and multifaceted practice that extends beyond public institutions. In response to the gaps and blind spots left by traditional archives, counter-archives emerge to preserve and care for neglected, subaltern, and marginalized histories (Amad, 2010; Kros, 2015). These histories often arise from struggles that fall outside the scope of official institutions' preservation efforts, though they can also be found there if one reads between the lines, across state institutions, and situates the political economies of official documents (Lowe, 2015). Nevertheless, counter-archives play a crucial role in collecting, interpreting, and exhibiting these stories, ensuring they remain accessible when they become necessary and relevant.

Counter-archives, in this sense are part and parcel of the project of counter-memory-making, or what Michel Foucault once described as a process of remembering the social, political, and economic contexts that produce history. For him, and many who have followed in his footsteps, memory itself is a construct rather than something naturally occurring and therefore true. Building upon this, George Lipsitz has articulated counter-memory as “a way of remembering and forgetting that starts with the local, the immediate, and the personal. Unlike historical narratives that begin with the totality of human existence and then locate specific actions and events within that history, counter-memory starts with the particular and the specific and then builds outward toward a total story”(1989, p. 162). In this way, counter-memory reframes dominant historical narratives and imaginaries of totality, remaining suspicious of “History” while at the same time participating in its making.

In this vein, and as Sam Burgum (2022) notes, archives are not static; their authority is ‘always becoming.’ This opens up the possibility of rethinking archives as dynamic spaces where authority can be reshaped rather than merely resisted. Community archives, for instance, challenge the dominance of mainstream institutions by building their own claims to authority. These projects are not simply anti-authority; they create alternative narratives grounded in participation, inclusion, and negotiation. Community archives, or at least many of them, offer a new model of authority, one that is responsive to and reflective of the diverse experiences and voices often omitted from traditional archival institutions. In this way, they redefine the role of archives as spaces of empowerment and social change. In moments of ideological confusion, such as those characterized by narratives of the ‘end of history,’ people engaged in struggle become themselves living archives. They embody and carry knowledge, often in the absence of formal institutions, keeping it ready to share with new generations and fellow activists whenever the need arises (Bloch, 2022). Sometimes, the work of movement archiving is thus to write these personal stories down—to record them so that we can read, listen to, view, or feel them in a radical way. Such a practice means asking ourselves what we have witnessed and how it can inform and empower our current and future struggles. This form of archiving is both an act of resistance and a means of sustaining the memory of struggles for future use.

Examples of archiving groups are found globally. For example, the [Southwark Notes Archive Group](#) (SNAG) in London is a grassroots collective of local residents actively

resisting the negative impacts of urban regeneration in their community and dedicated to archiving the struggles for the right to home and the city. Their focus lies in challenging regeneration projects that superficially promise improvement while prioritizing private profits over the needs of local people. Revolutionary Berlin chooses a different form of archiving urban histories. They have been offering anti-capitalist walking tours through the German capital since 2009, exploring little-known or concealed parts of German and European history. The tours focus on famous personalities, such as Rosa Luxemburg or Karl Marx, on neighborhoods such as the Rote Insel (Red Island) or Kreuzberg, which are known for their political activism and working-class struggles, or on selected historical events such as the November Revolution in 1918, in which the German emperor was overthrown and the first Democratic German state, the Weimar Republic, was founded. This range of walking tours, offered by trained (public) historians, forms a repository of different histories of the same city that are not to be understood in isolation but as interwoven parts of Berlin's tissue. The Anti-Eviction Mapping Project's Narratives of Displacement and Resistance is a living archive of tenant stories across the San Francisco Bay Area, New York City, and Los Angeles (Maharawal & McElroy, 2018). Taking an oral history approach to producing knowledge through a sense of shared authority with tenants and oral history producers (Frisch, 1990), the project documents and spatializes hundreds of stories of loss amidst rampant gentrification, but also deeply personal neighborhood histories and stories of resistance. The Narratives project has become an umbrella for a number of offshoot projects by the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, including film projects, zines, murals, and even a print atlas (Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, 2021). Currently the project is launching a new oral history endeavor specifically oriented towards producing oral histories with tenants of the Bay Area's worst evictors.

Radical housing struggles are, in many ways, about archiving. They go beyond simply creating repositories and take on multiple shapes and forms. Archiving these struggles means caring for our strategies and tactics, our victories and losses, and the stories people share, including their nightmares and dreams. It ensures we do not have to start from scratch each time, but instead have a foundation from which to build new movements. As archives are often state infrastructure that makes decisions about who and what is remembered, archiving in housing movements is a radical care intervention where we care for our collective stories and render our lives, movements, and homes as worthy of remembering. Archives hold the memories of past struggles, the realities of current ones, and the blueprints for those yet to come.

Radical housing journal as archiving

Radical Housing Journal itself has established an archive of struggles over land, housing, and urban space in the past five years. Since the publication of our first issue in 2019, RHJ editors have used their collaborative writing projects to reflect on urban change and document particular moments which have impacted housing struggles globally. Starting with the first issue, which focused on the 2008 financial crisis and its detrimental effects on the homes and livelihoods of many (see issue 1.1), RHJ has traced many historical moments

since. We have collectively meditated on moments of conjuncture that have not only altered but in many parts of the world worsened the post-2008 housing crisis as well as the inability of policy-makers to adequately respond to the housing question. Less than a year after RHJ launched, the Covid-19 pandemic caused an unprecedented rupture in housing struggles. Issue 2.1 was published while the world was in lock-down and we were affected by stay-at-home orders (see [issue 2.1](#)), documenting the painful losses caused by Covid-19 as well as the insecurities and stress that many experienced within their homes.

These socially-distant times were a moment to rethink mutual aid and care as well as radical housing struggles in the face of growing housing insecurity, mass-evictions, and homelessness caused by the pandemic and related austerity politics, as many of our papers that were published in the aftermath of 2020 attest to. Almost exactly two years later, Europe was facing war as Russia had attacked Ukraine and violated international law. RHJ editors used the space of the journal to reflect on this conjunctural moment in which the housing situation of many was further degrading while fascist regimes bolstered their power (see [issue 4.1](#)). There was a sense of despondency as global crises were mounting and an almost collective longing for ‘normalcy’ in a world unmoored. Yet, tracing housing struggles from 2008 to 2022 and beyond made clear that ‘normal simply means the reproduction of a racial capitalist machine that continues to accumulate profit through violence and dispossession’ (Vilenica et al., 2022, p. 2). This statement by RHJ editors has since been reinforced. Not only is affordable and adequate housing under attack due to state rationalities (see [issue 4.2](#)), but also due to violent conflicts and settler colonial regimes in Gaza and many battlefields around the world (see [issue 6.1](#)), which perpetuate dispossession, displacement, and housing insecurity. Rather than returning to ‘normal,’ we as Radical Housing Journal and in collaboration with our authors thus aim to document these turbulent times in housing struggles and establish alternative spaces of home and care.

Consequently, Radical Housing Journal aims to be more than an archive of past and current housing struggles. We want our journal to portray spaces where we see alternative urban and housing futures emerge as well as moments of revolutionary power that came before as sources of inspiration and strength for on-going housing struggles. We seek to uplift contributions on struggles on the ground and activists’ efforts that imagine different futures and new geographies in order to create a repository of radical housing initiatives. Radical housing archiving is thus a complex practice: It is about keeping the past alive and taking hold of our histories through radical storytelling, but also about creating a new grammar for housing futures and a repository of alternatives. We thus conceive of Radical Housing Journal as a living archive that is growing and adapting as the fight over housing continues.

In this issue

The current issue similarly aims to archive housing struggles in Europe, North America, Latin America, and Africa, as well as to enlarge our repository of initiatives and activists’ efforts.

The five Long Reads we have assembled focus on housing struggles in geographies as diverse as Riga, Leipzig, Vienna, Los Angeles, and Copenhagen. **Caroline Birkner's** piece 'Fostering long-term conviviality of refugees in the city: "Intersectional housing" for an inclusive community in Vienna' argues that even though Vienna is often praised for its social housing programs, it is facing a two-fold housing crisis, in which there is not only a lack of affordable housing but also no sufficient options for refugees coming to the city in the hope of finding shelter. The city has thus implemented a sustainable building strategy in 2009 to enhance collaborative and inclusive housing projects. Through interviews with stakeholders and residents, this paper seeks to evaluate the program's potential to provide housing to refugees and to identify key factors that facilitate the arrival and integration of refugees in Vienna.

In 'Beyond the right to stay put: Fighting for housing remunicipalization in Chinatown, Los Angeles' **Mathilde Lind Gustavussen** focuses on a citizen-led remunicipalization campaign led by the Hillside Villa tenants who face displacement after the affordability covenant on their building has run out. By using eminent domain, a tool for the city to seize private property, the residents are fighting to bring their building under municipal control, thereby securing long-term affordability and tenant control. Based on interviews and participatory observations, Mathilde Lind Gustavussen follows the residents' wins and losses and, more broadly, underscores the power of remunicipalization campaigns worldwide.

Rebecka Söderberg's article "'This is not a ghetto": Residents' resistance and re-negotiation of neighborhood narratives' builds on ethnographic fieldwork in a multi-ethnic public housing neighborhood in Copenhagen known as the Mjølnerparken targeted by Danish 'ghetto legislation' for state-led gentrification. Söderberg shows how residents use more subtle forms of resistance against the commodification and racialisation of their neighborhood, through staying put, non-cooperating, voicing/visualising discontent, re-negotiating neighborhood narratives, and enacting a homeplace.

In their paper titled 'Migrant Housing Struggles and Racial Discrimination: The Case of Post-Socialist Leipzig and Riga,' **Harriet Allsopp, Giovanna Astolfo, Annegret Haase, Karlis Laksevics, Anika Schmidt and Bahanur Nasya** examine how housing for refugees reveals both solidarity and deeply entrenched state racism. Drawing on research from Leipzig and Riga, the authors explore the intersection of migrant housing struggles with race and discrimination, highlighting the colonial roots of these injustices.

Fiadh Tubridy and John Bohan's article, 'The party in the flats: Relationships between housing movements and the political party form in 1970s Irish rent strikes,' offers a nuanced investigation into the relationships between housing movements and political parties. By examining the case of Irish rent strikes in the 1970s, Tubridy and Bohan offer a useful framework through which to carefully trace how political parties' different activities might shape the generalizing and politicizing of housing movements.

The Update by **Daniel Manyasi, Loretta Lees and Ashley West** 'Single Mothers Association of Kenya (SMAK) and the Fight to Stay Put on the Ziwani Estate in Nairobi' follows the residents of Ziwani as they fight to turn their estate into a community land trust.

Led by SMAK, a community-based organization, they have been advocating for land and housing rights as well as for the community's right to their history in one of the oldest public housing estates in East Africa. Further, this piece reflects on the internationalization of SMAK's fight to stay put and the co-operations between academics, activists, policy-makers, and NGO stakeholders in order to draw attention to the Ziwani residents' fight for housing justice.

The Conversation by **Neil Gray** and **Hamish Kallin** with **Joe Beswick, Damian Dempsey, Siobhan Donnachie, Tommy Gavin, Jennie Gustafsson, Konstantin Kholodilin, Oksana Mironova, Edna Monroy, Jamie Palomera, Maria Persdotter, Ana Vilenica** and **Maria Wallstam**, titled 'Rent Controls in Comparative Perspective: Reflections on a Symposium' shares key debates emerging around rent controls, shared by activists and academics across Europe and North America in a symposium organized by Living Rent in Scotland. From their contexts, participants reflect on the history of struggles for rent control, current regulations and their effectiveness, the role of tenants' movements, landlord lobbying, and what satisfactory rent control could look like on the ground.

The book review written by **Khushboo Jain**, critically examines the recently published volume on 'Housing, Homelessness, and Social Policy in the Urban North' edited by Julia Christensen, Sally Carraher, Travis Hedwig and Steven Arnfjord. According to Jain, the volume highlights the complexities of homelessness in the Canadian North, Greenland, and Alaska, challenging conventional social policy approaches and stressing the need for context-specific solutions. The book further offers valuable insights through case studies that are rather unusual for their geographic remoteness, exploring how historical and structural factors perpetuate homelessness and intersect with social policy and geographies of welfare colonialism.

The third part of the Conversation Series 'Pursuing Tenant International: Learning from Struggles for Home in Abya-Yala' edited by **Ana Vilenica** serves as a particular archival practice, documenting the genealogies and effects of decentralized tenant-led movements across the so-called Americas. By capturing dialogues with militants, organizers, base leaders, planners and intellectuals, this series provides a record of strategies, challenges, and perspectives in housing struggles both locally and across borders. In their Conversation 'It's Not About Building Houses; It's About Building People's Power: A Conversation with the **Movimiento Territorial de Liberación (MTL)** Buenos Aires,' Carmen and Andrea discuss how the MTL's efforts extend beyond constructing housing, focusing on building collective power, self-management, and resistance to capitalist exploitation, while connecting their work to broader struggles against neoliberalism and imperialism in Latin America. In 'Latin American Networking and Cooperative Struggles in Argentina: A Conversation with the **Movimiento de Ocupantes e Inquilinos (MOI)**,' **Néstor Jeifetz** discusses the MOI's role in Argentina's cooperative housing movement, emphasizing self-management, collective ownership, and the fight against neoliberal policies, while situating these struggles within broader Latin American resistance movements influenced by liberation theology and socialism. The Conversation with **Beatriz Pedro** of **El Taller Libre de Proyecto Social (TLPS)** titled 'Accompanying Popular Organisations through Grassroots Planning in

Argentina’ discusses the evolution of grassroots planning in Argentina from the 2001 economic crisis to a collaborative, community-centered approach, emphasizing the role of university involvement and international networks in transforming traditional architectural practices. The Part I and Part II of the Conversation titled ‘Norita is the first of many self-managed community neighborhoods to come’ explore the collective struggle for land and housing rights in **Barrio Norita Cortiñas**, a project that emerged from the Guernica land occupations during the pandemic. The discussions highlight the challenges of self-managing a community amid government repression and economic hardship, emphasizing feminist leadership, multisectoral collaboration, and connections to broader national and international housing justice movements. The Conversation with **Gustavo Machado** from Facultad de Ciencias Sociales de la Universidad de la República titled ‘Cooperativism as a Pedagogy,’ explores how cooperatives in Uruguay serve as a transformative pedagogical model, integrating social learning, collective action, and resistance to neoliberalism in housing. In ‘Struggles of Vehicle Residents in Squamish: Challenging Capitalist and Colonial Institutions of Housing,’ **Thomasina Pidgeon** from the Vehicle Residents of Squamish discusses her experience of living in a vehicle as an act of resistance against gentrification, restrictive housing policies, and the colonial legacy that prioritizes property and profit over human needs, while continuing to advocate for the rights of vehicle residents and to connect to broader social justice movements.

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