

Participatory Housing: A New Conceptual Framework for Democratic Forms of Housing in the Czech Republic*

JAN MALÝ BLAŽEK^{1**}, TOMÁŠ HOŘENÍ SAMEC²,
PETR KUBALA², VÁCLAV ORCÍGR³

¹Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Brno

²Institute of Sociology, Czech Academy of Sciences, v. v. i., Prague

³Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, Prague

Abstract: In recent years, in response to the increasing unaffordability of housing, many European countries have seen a renewed interest in forms of housing that emphasise elements of cooperation, self-organisation, and sharing (of space, organisation, or ownership between households). In the Czech Republic, we recently identified the first efforts of some municipalities and smaller groups of citizens to transpose this ‘housing innovation’ into the Czech context, which until now has predominantly favoured individual owner-occupied housing. Considering that these emerging forms of housing in the Czech Republic have yet to be conceptualised in theory, the goal of our article is to initiate a debate on a more precise conceptual understanding. To this end, we propose an overarching definition of participatory housing, which we present using three defining principles and five dimensions of participation. Reflecting on existing Western European conceptualisations and a historical contextualisation of (related forms of) housing in the territory of what is today the Czech Republic, we discuss the specific dimensions of the concept of participatory housing, the conditions of its existence, and what makes it distinct from other forms of housing.

Keywords: participatory housing, conceptual framework, collaborative housing, housing crisis, Czech Republic, historical contextualisation

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Introduction

In many European countries, the diminishing affordability of conventional housing forms – homeownership and private rental – is a major issue. This especially concerns households entering the market, such as young adults (Grander, 2021; Hoření Samec & Kubala, 2022; Waldron, 2022). Certain studies have termed the situation a *housing affordability crisis* (Brysch & Czischke, 2021; Martínez & Gil, 2022), while other studies relate it to the climate and environmental crises (Horne, 2018; Nelson, 2018). The recent responses encompass development of housing forms in which residents cope with the commodification and financialisation of housing through intentional collaboration (Archer, 2022; Bresson & Denèfle, 2015; Brysch & Czischke, 2021; Ferreri & Vidal 2022; Hagbert et al., 2019; Tummers, 2016). The (prospective) residents are either creating new housing forms, such as *baugruppen* (building groups) or tenant networks, or updating existing ones, for instance, housing cooperatives. The implicit aim of these (new) housing forms is to increase democratic governance and resident control over housing conditions, quality, accessibility, sustainability and over the sharing of space, things or activities. Development of such new housing forms is only at its beginning in the Czech Republic, however, facing the intensifying housing affordability crisis motivates attempts to bring the innovations into the local context. The current attempts do not necessarily follow the historical tradition and inspiration based on the housing models with participatory elements (cooperatives, collective houses), which have been researched from the history of architecture point of view.

With respect to the absence of theoretical and conceptual definitions of the *new* housing forms in the Czech context, this paper aims to formulate a conceptual framework for collective and democratic housing forms. We introduce the overarching concept of *participatory housing*, which we define as forms of housing in which multiple households deliberately and democratically decide on the character and level of participation in the following dimensions: (1) organisational, (2) economic, (3) social, (4) spatial and (5) in relation to participation of other actors. Furthermore, we provide a conceptual and analytical tool—the participatory housing compass—which aims to provide a transparent and robust tool for analysis of the modes and extent of participation of households and other actors. Both the concept and the compass are the result of interdisciplinary work by a team of social scientists and architects. We propose further discussion and possibly a critique of its application for use in designing participatory housing projects, in conducting research and in developing theories or typologies of

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** Direct all correspondence to: Mgr. Ing. Jan Malý Blažek, Department of Environmental Studies, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Joštova 10, 602 00 Brno, e-mail: maly-blazek@fss.muni.cz.

housing. The conceptual framework is deliberately broad in order to be applied to different and emerging housing forms. Thus, we also discuss borderline and liminal cases of housing projects that have certain participatory elements but do not fit our definition. The potential for further research is to empirically test the conceptualisation. In this sense, the conceptualisation provides a framework for the abstract discussion of different collective housing forms as well as a tool for further empirical investigation.

In this article, we reflect on international and mostly Western European studies which conceptualise participatory housing forms as collaborative, community-oriented or simply co-housing. By reflecting on these conceptual and empirical studies, we are aware that the transfer of knowledge and innovations from one context to another is a complex and multi-layered process involving a plethora of actors and actor networks (Konopásek et al., 2018; Nielsen & Jensen, 2013), an argument also thematised by studies from the *policy mobility* paradigm (see McCann & Ward, 2012). However, it is beyond the scope of this article to analyse how one housing form or its specific element is transferred from one national/local context to another, nor to identify and analyse these particular networks.

The article is structured as follows: first, European-based conceptualisations of participatory/collaborative housing forms are presented as starting points for the proposed conceptualisation. We then turn to a historical overview of potentially participatory housing forms that have emerged in the historical territory of the current Czech Republic. In the next part, we thoroughly present the new conceptualisation of participatory housing, focusing on five dimensions that can be used to determine the participation intensity. In the discussion, we compare our conceptualisation with existing (borderline) forms of housing and reflect on the possible pitfalls of using the proposed concept. Finally, we summarise our argument, offer additional ways to possibly develop the conceptualisation and identify directions for further research.

Participatory housing conceptualisations in the European context

Participation in housing is not a new phenomenon. In the sense of the active, coordinated and collaborative involvement of households in the process of building and managing dwellings, collective ownership and sharing services and space, it has appeared in several waves since the end of the nineteenth century, with roots in earlier religious or socialist utopias. In the last 20 years, the segment has been re-emerging in many European and non-European countries. One factor accelerating this process has been the post-2008 mortgage and financial crisis period, the associated decreasing affordability of housing and its increasing commodification and financialisation (Bresson & Denèfle, 2015; Ferreri & Vidal, 2022; Tummers, 2016). The development of participatory housing is also largely a response to the environmental unsustainability of existing forms of housing or

the energy intensity of construction (Nelson, 2018, 2019; Pickerill, 2011). This latest wave encompasses a range of housing models varying in size, modes of provision, the character of collaboration between residents, and arrangements with other private and public actors in the construction process and in their various objectives beyond housing.

Given the great variability, several conceptualisations have been made in recent years. In the following sections, we present different conceptualisations, especially from the (Western) European context. First, we present conceptualisations that divide the research field into different forms and models. Then, in response to this conceptual fragmentation, we reflect on the current debate in search of an overarching conceptualisation.

Conceptualising over form: baugruppe, cohousing or housing cooperative?

In this framework, participatory housing refers primarily to the relatively widespread concepts of cohousing, building groups (*baugruppen*) and tenant associations, housing cooperatives and cooperative neighbourhoods, and, especially in smaller towns and rural areas, ecovillages and other self-help housing groups. Moreover, various forms of institutional shared housing (community housing for seniors or people with disabilities) and even some municipal and rental housing with participatory elements can also be included (Czischke et al., 2020). While some local forms have spread successfully to other countries, including their original terms (in German, e.g., a *baugruppe* or *syndikat* of tenants; Hurlin, 2019), in new contexts, the meaning is often transformed, or the concept takes on new contents and connotations (as studies in the field of policy mobility show in the example of urban policy transfers; see McCann & Ward, 2012). In other cases, specific local forms retain a local scope for cultural or legal reasons, such as Denmark's strongly community-oriented cohousing (*bofællesskab* in Danish; see McCamant & Durrett, 2011), the radically ecological homesteads of *low-impact developments* in the United Kingdom (Pickerill & Maxey, 2012) or *community land trusts*, widespread in the Anglo-Saxon context (see Conaty et al., 2003; Thompson, 2020).

Through the mobility of innovation or in international comparisons, local nuances that distinguish (or confuse¹) certain forms of housing may be lost. For example, in German-speaking countries, there are *Wohngemeinschaften* (flatshare communities; groups of mostly temporary rental housing), *Baugruppen* (building groups), also known as *Baugemeinschaften* (building communities; residents forming a group/community to collaboratively build and manage housing) and *Wohnprojekte* (housing projects; groups creating housing with a shared vision).

¹ For example, Munich's Forum for *Baugemeinschaften* confuses the terms *Baugemeinschaft*, *Baugruppe* and *Bauherrengemeinschaft*).

Yet, it is common for one project to be titled a *Baugruppe*, a *Wohnprojekt*, *gemeinschaftliches Wohnen* (community housing) or cohousing over its lifespan.² The often-problematic legal anchoring of resident cooperation in many countries also compounds the confusion. For example, some building groups use the hybrid legal structure of associations and limited liability companies, whereas others establish cooperatives. Elsewhere, under the same legal framework, we find both 'old' and 'new' forms of housing cooperatives operating in parallel, with the new forms as a response, for example, to the lack of democratic control and participatory involvement in existing housing forms (Thompson, 2020).

Conceptualising the objectives: more than housing

Conducted in six European countries between 2015 and 2018 (Blažek, 2019), the mapping of community-oriented residential housing projects showed that the key defining criterion is the intentionality and importance placed on objectives, where intentionality can be understood as the actual self-definition of a group of households to act as a housing project with a certain vision and objectives. While some projects are created for the sole purpose of housing, many emphasise self-organisation and community character as well as political, cultural, social, environmental or spiritual objectives. This is particularly present in ecovillages, residential enterprises (e.g., agricultural, educational or manufacturing), autonomous political collectives, trailer parks and squats.³ Many 'standard' participatory housing projects, such as those (self-)defined as *baugruppe*, cohousing or housing cooperatives⁴, however, set explicit or implicit objectives, often relating to the residential target group, for example, feminist projects oriented towards women or LGBTQ+ people, ageing projects (seniors, 50+), social community housings for migrants or people with disabilities, and others (for selected examples, see id22: Institute for Creative Sustainability: experiment city [id22], 2012). Consequently, new conceptualisations considering the interconnection between objectives and target groups have been elaborated, especially as regards intentional communities and eco-communities (Escribano et al., 2020; Mulder et al., 2006; Pickerill, 2012; Communities Directory, 2010; Wagner, 2012).

² Similarly, in the French context, many related forms exist: *co-habitat*, *habitat groupé*, *habitat partagé*, *habitat participatif*, *habitat autogéré*, *habitat alternatif*, *coopérative d'habitants* and *coopératives d'habitation* (Bresson & Denèfle, 2015)

³ On the importance of (un)intentionality and objectives, we must also include examples of 'temporary' and 'liminal' forms of housing, such as 'right-to-the-city' projects or others created by marginalised groups (such as houseless people) (see e.g., Vašát, 2021).

⁴ Indeed, one of Zurich's best-known building cooperatives is called *mehr als wohnen* (more than housing). It provides a platform for non-profit sustainable housing and neighbourhood development (Boudet, 2017).

Overarching conceptualisation: from collaborative to participatory

The richness of local contexts and academic perspectives has produced a plethora of concepts, terms and models. However, for a number of reasons outlined above, concepts are intentionally and unintentionally confused and redefined, not only during the mobility of innovation between cities, countries and actors but also over time. In the following section, we, therefore, present a response to this situation: a debate on the scope of the overarching conceptualisation. One of the key aspects that distinguish participatory forms of housing from prevailing forms of rental, ownership or municipal housing is the active involvement of a group of residents in the creation, duration or eventual break-up of the entire project. Thus, the fundamental questions in this debate are to determine where the boundaries of this segment lie and to determine what the active involvement of residents actually means.

Tummers (2016) uses the umbrella term *co-housing* (with a hyphen⁵) to refer to the re-emergence of the participatory housing segment in Europe and to basically cover the initiatives of residents that are collectively shaping housing. In France, the term *habitat participatif* (participatory housing) has been adopted for initiatives in which the collective of residents is a key actor in the construction and management of housing (Bresson & Denèfle, 2015). However, Zimmermann (2014), a representative of the urban planning department in the city of Strasbourg, France, points out that participatory housing cannot be understood only as the independent self-help construction of housing groups. He defines *habitat participatif* as housing that is created with residents already actively involved in urban planning and housing policymaking—in concrete decisions about the design, construction and management of housing. Although the French authors propose a conflation of *habitat participatif* with Anglo-Saxon *co-housing*, the French term encompasses projects created in various combinations of cooperation, including top-down projects in which the municipality, the state or even the non-profit sector is the main developer. Other authors (Czischke et al., 2020; Lang & Stoeger, 2018) propose covering the segment with the term *collaborative housing*, which encompasses a wide range of concepts and local variants of participatory housing and *community-oriented housing*, categories defined by an emphasis on the collaboration of residents within the group (community-oriented) and in terms of cooperation with other actors (participatory) (Thompson, 2020).

⁵ Cohousing (without a hyphen) is then a widespread participatory housing model with origins in Danish or American cohousing. These are characterised by a focus on spatial design promoting social contact and in which residents are heavily involved in planning and governance and also regularly spend time together, e.g., by cooking with each other (McCamant & Durrett, 2011).

Conceptualising according to the involvement of other actors: between bottom-up and top-down projects

There are examples of projects in which the public actor has a leading role in creating participatory housing—whether in setting conditions, for example, designating land for participatory forms of housing in the spatial plan, as is common in some German or Austrian cities; in defining criteria for public tenders or other forms of resident selection; or even in developing participatory municipal housing (id22, 2012). The city or state may also have a role as a lending institution, a consultant, a moderator or a facilitator of the process (Boyer, 2014; Lang & Stoeger, 2018; Tummers, 2015). Tummers (2015) adds that only in the context of local urban planning may we fully understand the significance of co-housing projects as ‘micro-laboratories’ for urban development, housing typologies, shared spaces management and the implementation of new financing models or legal forms. In this sense, Droste (2015) and LaFond et al. (2017) reflect on the influence of urban housing policy on the development of *co-housing* in Germany, which can significantly enhance the potential of these forms vis-à-vis housing affordability. As Czischke et al. (2020) point out, the aforementioned community land trust is also a form of participatory housing that goes beyond the builders’ and residents’ groups. Land trusts are anchored in the local community with investment, ownership, social control and governance. They are often created alongside or in collaboration with the municipality, but the key role stays in the local community. It is the local collective ownership and management and the non-profit nature of the *commons* that make housing affordable in this regime. Moreover, private limited-profit associations, such as building cooperatives and other non-profit developers, also play an important role in the construction of participatory housing.

Nevertheless, both Czischke et al. (2020) and Thompson (2020) mention that if the notion of collaborative housing is expanded to include various top-down forms, the risk that private and institutional actors could appropriate the segment increases, and thus, so too does the risk of limiting democratic control and housing commodification. In any case, the inclusion of top-down forms under collaborative housing opens a debate about one of its key characteristics—the determining influence of resident groups on the design, construction and management of housing. Finding a clear dividing line between ‘truly community-based’ (i.e., self-organised or even autonomous) projects and those moderated by other actors with the ‘more subtle involvement’ of residents is not easy. In this respect, Gruber and Lang’s (2018) typology of Viennese collaborative housing models is very useful. It categorises the intensity of involvement from cities, limited-profit companies (housing cooperatives, developers) and resident groups in the construction and management process.⁶

⁶ Differing from the *conventional* model in which residents are only involved in the use/management of shared spaces, the authors define four models of collaborative housing:

Risk of the concept itself being appropriated (whether we use the term collaborative or participatory housing) is perhaps not as great as that of the original idea being co-opted into the standard profit-making market logic. This process can be observed, for example, in the sharing or collaborative economy. Despite the progress of diverse community initiatives and urban commons, those who benefit in particular from the sharing and collaborative trend in today's neoliberal city are the digital sharing economy platforms (Acquier et al., 2017; Frenken & Schor, 2017). This is also due to ambivalent support from municipalities, which perceive sharing as an opportunity to cultivate decentralised governance, participation and non-commercial civil society activities on the one hand, and to develop commercial Smart City techno-innovations on the other (Gruszka, 2017). Perhaps also in response to this trend, LaFond et al. (2017) include under participatory housing only those practices that are actually created by the self-organised communities of future residents, hence the term *community-led housing* or, again, co-housing. This does not necessarily mean that a group cannot cooperate with other actors, whether private or public. The fundamental principle, according to the authors, is direct democratic control over the process of housing construction and management. LaFond (2021) also draws attention to the interdependence of democratic control and the social ecology of housing: control over the economic, social and environmental aspects of housing—affordability as well as energy efficiency—especially important due to the interdependence of the housing crisis and the ecological and climate crises.

Although different authors use different terms—collaborative housing (Czischke et al., 2020), co-housing (Tummers, 2015), participatory (Bresson & Denèfle, 2015) or community-oriented housing (LaFond et al., 2017)—it is arguably the intentionality of the form of housing and of the objectives, the active involvement of households and democratic control over construction and management which are the three key characteristics of these segments distinguishing them from other forms of housing.

Historical contextualisation of housing with participatory elements in the territory of today's Czech Republic: development, regression and stagnation

Historically, forms of housing with varying degrees of participation among the inhabitants appeared in the territory of the present-day Czech Republic, mainly

(a) a *participatory* model, in which residents fully control the management of shared spaces and are also involved in the planning process and financing; (b1) a *partnership model*, in which residents are in total control of the planning, use and management of shared spaces and are significantly involved in all other aspects, including financing, allocation and the reallocation of housing units; (b2) an *autonomous baugruppe* model in which the group is autonomous, only cooperating with other actors in financing; and (C) a *syndicate model*, in which the residents are entirely autonomous.

during the First Republic—in the interwar period, and during the socialist period (1948–1989). In the interwar period, a building boom took place in response to the housing crisis caused by the intensive urbanisation process. The basic pre-conditions for the building development consisted of legislative adjustments and significant state support in the 1920s, which, through various measures⁷, enabled more effective management of housing funds and the development of municipal and cooperative construction, especially of small flats. However, as it is today, the mere support of new construction was not enough to ensure quality and affordable housing for all, especially for the poorest groups. The necessity to have a certain amount of initial capital, despite state support, practically excluded people without savings from the possibility of achieving a new (own) apartment, including the rental housing segment (Potůček, 2018, pp. 18–24). Criticism of the shortcomings of otherwise relatively effective policies was formulated by, among others, the interwar avant-garde left, especially in circles around the theoretician Karel Teige. Gradually, the ideas of *the minimum dwelling* and *koldoms* (collective houses) were born, both of which symbolise historical examples of housing with participatory elements in our territory. However, Teige's original ideas in their pure form, particularly in relation to collective houses, were never implemented (Guzik, 2017). The emphasis was mainly on shared social interactions and the use of common spaces (dining rooms, spaces for cultural and social activities). In the end, only two projects closely resembled the defined theoretical concepts of *koldoms*—in Litvínov and Zlín. This may well have been due to the fact that the premises defined by the interwar avant-garde, which shaped the concept of *koldoms*, were not only detached from the ideas and preferences of the tenants themselves but also showed, concrete practical problems, such as noise and fumes from canteens located directly in the house, low flexibility with regard to the needs of the residents (e.g., family expansion) and low levels of involvement in the communal activity organisation (Guzik, pp. 70–71). The distinct lack of democratic governance among residents may also have been behind the low social longevity of *koldoms* (see, e.g., Daňková, 2014; Musil, 1960).

We find similar limits in other historical forms, yet the historical context is ignored, especially in the case of cooperative housing. Illustrating their importance, housing cooperatives initiated more than half of the new construction between 1921 and 1923. In a second wave, in 1930–31, over 1,600 housing cooperatives were registered in Czechoslovakia, mainly related to the construction of small-scale housing. However, according to many evaluations, the ambitions of cooperative construction were only partially fulfilled, whether due to the difference in ideas between the intellectual elites who often initiated the construction

⁷ These included, for example, the establishment of the Czechoslovak housing fund or the creation of a law on state support for the building industry in 1919, which significantly subsidised municipal and cooperative construction of houses with small flats (Potůček, 2018, pp. 16–18).

and the cooperative owners themselves or the rather sub-standard quality of cooperative construction itself (Guzik, 2018, pp. 46–52).⁸ Cooperative construction was also promoted just after the Second World War, when, at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s, the ambitious Solidarita housing estate project was created with some defined common areas, such as the laundry and children's areas, (see, for example, Špičáková & Janečková, 2014). However, very soon the contradictory relationship of the Communist Party nomenklatura to cooperative housing became apparent when, during the 1950s, there was significant centralisation in construction and restrictions to the autonomy of cooperatives, including Solidarita. It was not until 1959 that the Law on Cooperative Construction contributed to further transforming the position of cooperative housing as an instrument in housing policy (cf. Novotná, 2020, pp. 135–137). Thanks to favourable loans for cooperatives with a long repayment period of up to 30 years, as well as support from the state mainly in the form of free land provision or assistance with project documentation, the share of cooperative housing grew significantly from the 1960s to the 1980s. During this period, cooperative housing had participatory elements in the sense of sharing legal subjectivity and financial costs. In a number of cases, active involvement was also possible (even necessary) in the implementation of the project; in other words, the cooperative members also participated directly in the construction via brigades, activating their cultural and social capital for the benefit of the construction (Hoření Samec et al., 2020).

The post-1989 transformation brought about the practical demise of most forms of housing with participatory elements. A massive wave of privatisation affected virtually all the housing stock—state, municipal, cooperative and company housing. Cooperatives were perceived as a relic of socialism. They were either dissolved or transformed into homeowners' associations (*unit owners' associations* known in Czech as *SVJ's*), and their participatory element was further suppressed. The housing privatisation transformed the structure of the housing stock while the practice represented an ideological inclination towards individualised forms of housing (Lux & Sunega, 2014), initiating a culturally anchored and shaped preference for private housing ownership—*privatism* (Hirt, 2012; Lehečka, 2019).⁹

There have been several self-organised housing projects created in the Czech Republic since the 1990s. These have mostly taken the form of several cooperating

⁸ However, even in this period, there are several recognised examples of quality construction. These include, for example, Red Houses (Červené domy) in Holešovice with extensive common areas (laundry, central kitchen), the Prague teachers' houses on Miloš Forman Square, the cooperative house at Trojdohoda in Pilsen and the cooperative projects of architects Josef Havlíček and Karel Honzík (and many others).

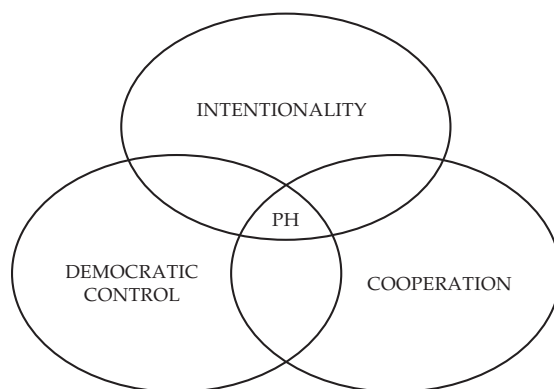
⁹ See also Lokšová and Galčanová Batista (2021) on the transformation of discourse in the context of privatism/liberalism and on the governance of local politicians in relation to housing development in municipalities.

families building common homesteads or sharing community apartments and houses. They have not, however, been replicated in a concrete housing model. Thus, we cannot speak of the broader development of the most frequently mentioned forms in the new wave of participatory housing, such as cohousing, *baugruppe* or housing cooperatives. Nonetheless, we must mention the post-1989 (and indeed even pre-1989) tradition of squats—underground and autonomous political projects (Kopáč & Kontra, 2021). In recent years, some local governments, the public administration and, consequently, the private sector have begun to formulate the first outlines of support for cooperatives and building groups. However, it is too early to assess their participatory potential or reflect on the determining influence of residents on the design, construction and management of housing.

A new conceptualisation of participatory housing in the Czech Republic

In Czech and Czechoslovakian history, several instances of housing projects with participatory elements appeared at different intensities, were proposed and managed by different actors and were emphasising different aspects of participation. However, these participatory forms of housing were, for the most part, rather temporary, existing mainly in the 1920s and 1930s and briefly in the 1945–48 period. The ambivalent relationship of the socialist state to bottom-up participation, together with the post-socialist emphasis on individualism, resulted in a preference for private ownership and the establishment of housing forms which are formally and legally cooperatives, but in practice act as quasi-individual ownership. Even some of the current public projects with participatory elements tend

Figure 1. Mental map of participatory housing



Note: The abbreviation PH = participatory housing.

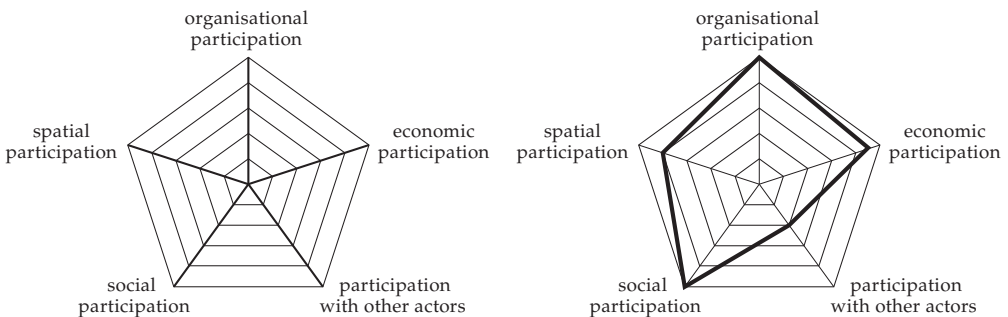
to adopt quasi-ownership forms, while some private commercial developments attempt to appropriate the community ethos in order to attract certain residents.

Taking into account the variety of housing models and practices in Czech/Czechoslovakian history and the European context, we will now attempt to define the new concept of *participatory housing* with three conditions: This form of housing should (1) enable the active involvement and cooperation of residents in the development of a housing project, including the creation phase and eventual termination; (2) allow democratic control over these processes; and (3) be intentionally created for the purpose of such cooperation (see Figure 1). While intentionality and democratic control are ‘fixed’ predispositions of participatory housing projects, the character and level of cooperation of the residents in the specific dimensions may vary.

We understand participatory housing as an umbrella concept for forms of housing that meet these three basic conditions (intentionality, democratic control and cooperation) and in which residents are involved and decide on the character and level of sharing within the following five dimensions: (1) property ownership rights and financial costs (i.e., *economic participation*); (2) preparation and management of the housing project (i.e., *organisational participation*); (3) physical space (i.e., *spatial participation*); (4) social contacts, goods and services (i.e., *social participation*); and (5) relationships and cooperation with other public and private actors in the housing development (i.e. *participation with other actors*). As a tool to grasp the plethora of participatory housing variations within the outlined dimensions, we present a *participatory housing compass* (Figure 2 on the left, with an application example on the right).

The current European debate on participatory, collaborative or community housing is mainly about the character of resident involvement and their control over these aspects. In this respect, our conceptualisation is close to the French *habitation participatif* as defined by Bresson and Denèfle (2015) and Zimmermann (2014). We understand participatory housing as a conceptual framework in which

Figure 2. Participatory housing compass



the topic of housing construction and management is reflected from the perspective of the inhabitants. However, the framework is open not only to *bottom-up* community projects but also a wide range of multi-actor solutions, including *top-down* projects in which municipalities or the private sector play the main development role. In this sense, the conceptual framework includes both *horizontal* and *vertical* participation components (Černá, 2017): horizontal participation refers to the involvement and cooperation of the residents mainly in the first to fourth dimensions, whereas vertical participation refers to the degree and nature of a given group's involvement in cooperation with public institutions (municipality, state) or (quasi-)private entities such as cooperatives, banks, developers and so forth. The character and level of participation are influenced by the legislative framework, housing policies, available financial products or professionals involved in the process. In all dimensions, however, the inhabitants of participatory housing can specify each aspect through a democratic process. This puts participatory housing in contrast to forms of housing in which the user has no possibility to define the degree of participation in any aspect other than by accepting conditions from other actors, whether private or public. In the following paragraphs, we briefly introduce the different dimensions of participation and their contents.

Spatial participation

A certain form of spatial participation, that is, the sharing of common spaces between cohabitants within an apartment building or a neighbourhood, is inherent. However, what distinguishes 'mere' coexistence from spatial *participation* is the element of the intentionality of sharing, which is imprinted directly in the materiality of the house, in the purposeful design of space (both indoors and outdoors). The use of space can be formal (for example, for certain community and business services, such as co-working spaces, cafes, etc.) or informal, allowing for leisure time, care or other things. Participatory housing projects are innovative in the design as well as management of common spaces, for example, in the implementation of different levels of shared spaces, from publicly accessible spaces to spaces designated for residents or those only of a single apartment building, floor or flat.

Social participation

We also distinguish social participation from 'ordinary' social interaction through the principles of intentionality and regularity and possibly also a certain institutionalisation of interactions in the sense of a manifestation of specific rules, systems and models of sharing services and things, joint purchase or activity logistics, systems of common space use or communication mechanisms. However, social participation can also be implemented in a non-formal way without explicitly expressing the rules or preferences of inhabitants. Social participation can take

very varied forms, ranging from joint leisure time to shared care duties as well as the sharing of goods and services. Indeed, establishing social participation is often the main formative element of participatory housing projects. As described earlier in the text, for residents, not only is the housing function essential, but so too are other goals and objectives, for instance, to reduce the cost of individual ownership of things (e.g., cars), and in improving the quality of neighbourhood relations.

Organisational participation

Participatory housing is characterised by the active involvement of its future inhabitants in its creation, whether in construction coordination, project management, self-help or architecture design. Of importance is the active involvement of the inhabitants in the management of the project—formal legal acts, dispute adjudication, maintenance or repair—that is, the establishment and discussion of the basic organisational and decision-making framework and the specific rules that then define tasks and responsibilities related to operation. Beyond the statutes defined in legal form, the vision, the basic rules and the rights and obligations between inhabitants are determined in house rules or similar documents. In the Czech context, a certain allusion to organisational participation is the participation of apartment owners in SVJs or their ‘executive bodies’, which formally unite individual households in order to decide on common issues based on the aliquot ownership of common spaces, or participation (direct or represented) in the decision-making processes of traditional housing cooperatives. In our conceptualisation, we see the emphasis on democratic control as essential, in the sense of creating inclusive infrastructure through which all members of a project have an equal opportunity (not necessarily an obligation) to participate and have a democratic voice in decision-making. Not every project requires the active involvement of all members for successful participation and even less so on larger-scale projects with tens or hundreds of households. Yet, it is important to create legal and cultural conditions that enable residents to participate.

Economic participation

Economic participation includes legal and financial arrangements for projects where individual households share financial costs and economic risks associated with the housing provision through a common project. As regards concrete implementations, the legislative and broader institutional environment (including housing policies, subsidies, the nature of the financial system and the financing infrastructure) is, of course, crucial, as it influences the choice of legal form, ownership model and financing. In reality, projects choose various legal forms, including limited liability companies, associations and cooperatives, as well as combinations of multiple legal entities (e.g., limited liability companies and associations).

The chosen legal form may allow for participatory organisation of the building construction and management, different overlapping ownership levels, an anti-speculative mechanism, the use of joint credit or subsidies, separate accounting controls and so on. The anti-speculation mechanism, which prevents individual participating households from using the project as a means to resell a particular asset, is one of the key tools cooperating residents have to prevent housing commodification. The practice of participatory housing has a large number of shared ownership variations related to the diversity of solutions for shared spaces and social and economic activities. There are projects with full collective ownership, but also projects in which households privately own housing units and jointly own some or all of the common spaces. Participatory housing projects are also unique in their use of different financing mechanisms to increase housing affordability and the social mix, including different sizes of initial financial shares, different repayment rates among households, direct loans and solidarity funds.

Participation with other actors

If the four participatory housing dimensions elaborated above are directed towards active households, the fifth dimension includes the character of involving other actors. These are primarily institutional actors, represented by local and state governments, professionals and consultants, and private developers with limited profitability. The nature of their participation can include both direct involvement in the project arrangement (municipality as co-owner or co-developer, social housing operator as a leaseholder, etc.) or indirect involvement (e.g., through land lease, process moderation, legal or consultancy services and other relationships). In line with our definition of participatory housing, the involvement of other actors in the process is perceived as participatory only if residents have the opportunity to use the tools of democratic governance and decide on their level of involvement, whether this takes on the form of representative or direct democracy—that is, if a group of residents have the opportunity to have real input into the decision-making process (see also Hagbert et al., 2019, pp. 9–12). Hagbert et al. conceptualise the role of institutional actors in the process of creating and operating participatory housing collectives as *urban governance* (Hagbert et al., p. 7). The authors thus emphasise the importance of the current political-economic context (neoliberal urbanism) in shaping participatory housing projects, both from a social and community perspective (Hagbert et al., pp. 204–206) as well as from a legal and economic perspective (Hagbert et al., pp. 207–210). The state or local authorities act as mediators of the market and facilitate its key role in the housing delivery system through deregulation and re-regulation (Hagbert et al., p. 10). From this perspective, the degree of involvement among other actors is not only relevant in terms of setting the conditions for construction and management but also as regards their influence on the intensity of household participation in other dimensions.

Discussion and conclusion

In the introduction, we coined the current housing affordability crisis as a rationale for new forms of participatory housing development due to their potential to reduce the impact of the crisis. Yet, in the Czech context, these are still rather isolated projects, since the situation is complicated by the negative historical connotations of collective forms of housing (sometimes perceived as pre-1989 models) and by the institutionalisation of the housing system based on individual ownership. Despite this starting position, the combination of crises (affordability, climate change, ageing population) has led to initial efforts to implement participatory housing on our territory, including some community-driven dwellings and recent experiments by local (municipal) governments. These, however, have yet to be reflected in the academic debate. In this paper, we have thus presented different conceptualisations of participatory housing forms coming from the Western European context, and, despite their diversity and certain opacity, we have presented their commonalities. Within our framework of participatory housing, we have identified the three most important features that most other definitions share: (1) democratic control over the processes of creation, implementation and dissolution of housing projects; (2) active and collaborative household involvement in the whole process and in different dimensions (social, spatial, organisational and economic as well as within the network of actors); and (3) the intentionality of origin, form and objectives precisely for the purpose of participation, collaboration and democratic control of housing. In order to test our conceptualisation, we (a) discuss the current use of the term 'participation' in Czech social science discourse and (b) reflect on borderline phenomena, which refine our definition. In the conclusion, we also suggest other possible research directions, such as empirical testing of the conceptualisation.

Use of the term *participation* in the Czech environment is associated with urban space planning or community services and with the practice of social work and caring professions (Beránková, 2014). Different levels of citizen involvement in decision-making processes can be considered (Arnstein, 1969), and participation can be conceptualised as active (e.g., decision-making processes) and passive (e.g., informing). The term 'participatory housing' primarily connotes *active* involvement in the process of housing creation and management but, in our conception, it encompasses both modalities of involvement: passive and active. Indeed, the projects and individual residents of participatory housing are actors anchored in a network of *necessary* collaboration (albeit in varying degrees of intensity) with other institutional actors (Hagbert et al., 2019), where both passive participation (access to information) and active action are assumed. In this context, the complexity (multidimensionality) of our model becomes apparent in that it involves certain asymmetric power relations. Within a network with other actors, we can expect more of a vertical participation character and thus the presence of certain power ties or relationships and their negotiation. For the other dimensions (social, spatial, organisational, economic), we assume a more

horizontal type of participation. In practice, it depends very much on the specific manifestations of the activated points of the power relations' network and on the complexity of the network. In this respect, the nature of the relations should be the subject of further empirical research.

When scrutinising the limitations of our definition and conceptualisation, it is necessary to emphasise that its breadth allows for the inclusion of community projects emerging from below and a range of multi-actor solutions as well as projects emerging from above in which the main development role is played by other actors (e.g., municipalities, cooperatives, co-developers). It could be argued that the conceptualisation is too broad and that any form of housing may be subsumed since there is a certain degree of sharing in each form of housing (sharing the corridors, courtyards, conversations, occasional help, repair funds etc.). However, this objection would ignore the fact that in our conceptualisation, participatory housing needs to meet the rules of *democratic control*, *intentionality* and *active involvement* among residents. This can be seen in the difference between participatory housing and, for example, co-living (Coldwell, 2019). As a form of shared housing, co-living is typically purchased by young professionals as a ready-made product on the market. They are not involved in the creation or running of the projects; they can, at most, choose from the options on offer. While they actively share space or join activities, the element of any involvement in group decision-making is missing and thus cannot be called participatory housing. Other borderline examples include some emerging residential development projects that meet the definition of gated communities (Ruiu, 2014), in which the emphasis is on services provided to residents, such as hotel-type services. These developments, however, do not meet the three basic conditions we identified.

The closest to our conceptualisation of participatory housing is cooperative housing. The intentionality of participation in cooperatives can be seen mainly in the dimension of joint financing and ownership as a way of providing more affordable housing. In current (Czech) practice, however, housing cooperatives have more of a quasi-ownership meaning. Even when creating new cooperatives, the expectation among residents is to buy the apartment into private ownership in the future. The other dimensions of participation are usually not emphasised. The participatory purpose of cooperatives is thus not often fulfilled. However, housing cooperatives are formally democratic—every member of the cooperative has equal weight in decision-making by law, in essence, a certain elementary infrastructure for democratic cooperation is legally ensured, and examples of more active (and participatory) cooperatives in line with our conceptualisation appear in practice. Over the years, however, a number of cooperatives have also been transformed into SVJs, in which individual owners continue to make decisions about the basic issues in the operation of the property. By law the influence on decision-making is de facto determined by the size of the floor area in private ownership, and therefore, the SVJ does not meet the condition of democratic decision-making. In addition, in comparison to cooperatives, the intentionality

of the SVJ is not evident in any dimension of participation but rather in the implementation of privately-owned housing. Again, the legal regulation obviously affects only formal participation, and thus, the form and culture of decision-making may vary from one apartment building to another. If a particular participatory housing project chooses the legal form of an SVJ to fulfil its objectives, it is, of course, possible that the SVJ housing form may also fulfil the proposed conditions of the participatory housing concept. On the other hand, the choice of the legal form has performative significance. From a practical functioning point of view, the chosen 'formal' organisation should correspond as closely as possible to the informal organisation, that is, that the project's legal regulations and statutes as well as practical organisational schemes align.

A wide range of shared housing can also be described as borderline cases. Yet, when multiple individuals share certain spaces in these housing arrangements, their actions are more often seen as a passive adaptation than active creation of certain forms of housing. Examples include student flat-sharing, temporary dormitories and 'projects' of people who are marginalised by public discourse (homeless people). Of course, even along this line, we can find many examples where a group of people actively engage democratically in various aspects of housing, such as when student housing becomes intentionally shared housing for young adults over time.

As a final boundary-testing example of our conceptualisation, we present an example of housing that incorporates participatory elements and that has been supported by institutional actors: the community-house-for-the-elderly (KODUS) model supported by the Ministry of Regional Development and expanded in dozens of examples (Věrtelář et al., 2019). KODUS is a model developed in cooperation between municipalities and private operators that emphasises shared common spaces and social activities among house residents. However, there is an absence of resident involvement in the planning process or ownership structure, and the organisational relations are through a standard rental arrangement.

Concluding our argument, the proposed concept of participatory housing needs further refinement and empirical testing. One step could be, for example, to gradually fill the dimensions with content (specific practices) and define sub-dimensions and relationships between dimensions. This could be followed by defining degrees of participation or trying to identify zero and maximum variations for each axis, including exploring liminal forms in which deliberate participation and democratic control occur only in certain dimensions of housing. In this context, the use of a participatory housing compass to collect and interpret data from, for example, questionnaires or group interviews and the related quantitative and qualitative methodological issues can also be discussed. The conceptualisation presented here can hopefully bring better clarity in terms of academic debates and research applications, contribute to understanding the complexity of housing in its various dimensions and convince public and private actors of the need for coordinated action in reducing unaffordability while increasing the

quality and sustainability of housing. In doing so, we fully acknowledge the fact that participatory housing is not the only possible solution to the housing affordability crisis and related crises, but rather, one of the tools that must be embedded. Promoting new forms of participatory housing does not mean abandoning municipal construction and housing (and social) policy as such. If we want to ensure inclusiveness, affordability, sustainability or other social goals in housing and avoid the gradual commodification of these new forms, they need to be significantly linked to municipal and state housing policy and public debate.

JAN MALÝ BLAŽEK is a PhD student in Environmental Studies and a researcher at the Department of Environmental Studies, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University. He studied economic policy and social geography at the same university. His professional interests include studying the economic context of eco-communities and collaborative housing in the Czech and European context, as well as participatory processes and the socioecological transformation of human settlements.

TOMÁŠ HOŘENÍ SAMEC is a sociologist working at the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences. He completed his doctoral studies in sociology at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague. His research focuses on housing discourse, the financialisation of housing and new forms of housing provision by public and collective actors.

PETR KUBALA is a sociologist working as a postdoctoral fellow at the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences. He completed his doctoral studies in sociology at the Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University. His research interests include young adults and social inequalities in housing, as well as the sociology of time and ethnographic methods.

VÁCLAV ORCÍGR is a doctoral student of sociology at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague, and the head of the Prague–City for Life campaign at Arnika. His professional interests include urban development, gentrification and the right to the city.

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