

HOUSING & HEALTH

THE ROLE OF DWELLING IN SHAPING INDIVIDUAL, COMMUNAL, AND PLANETARY WELL-BEING

The 8th Vienna International Summer School on New Social Housing cordially invites early-career scholars, practitioners, and activists to critically explore the varied linkages of housing and health. Adequate housing is a precondition for good health and well-being whilst housing deficiencies can have immediate negative consequences for physical and mental health. Historically, health and hygiene have been foundational factors for social housing and have been central to reform and renewal programs. In the early 20th century, architects emphasized cleanliness, openness and certain use of materials to promote health – sometimes with negative consequences for communities and residents. In response to more recent health crises, our understanding of the home has shifted, exposing existing societal issues, including those in domestic architecture (Colomina, 2020), while at the same time creating awareness of our health dependence on co-inhabiting the planet with microbes, plants, and fungi (Latour, 2021; Bosch et al., 2024).

In an era of multiple crisis – from ecological disasters, public health crises to humanitarian catastrophes – the Summer School focuses on housing as a determinant or inhibitor of health and well-being. We ask, if and how housing can serve as a foundation for individual, communal, and planetary health. By examining the links between planetary inhabitation, housing security and affordability, physical and mental health, and social well-being, we attend to the manifold dimensions and regional situatedness of housing and health. Key topics for the Summer School include:

Health and residential instability: Investigating the psychological significance of home, perceptions of security, and the dual role of housing as both shelter and a source of identity and social position in relation to well-being. Addressing the relation of housing and economics through health impacts of insecure tenure and residential instability (e.g., mortgage debt, overcrowding, homelessness) on individual and community well-being through the role of housing policies. Examining the negative consequences of ‘modernization,’ undertaken in the name of ‘health improvement’ and hygiene measures, such as demolition and forced relocation (e.g., slum clearance). Exploring the interrelations between social housing policies and public health policies or programmes, also in terms of demographic change (e.g., care and older persons, child well-being).

Designing spaces for health: Exploring the dual role of architecture: its potential to promote health and community, as well as its unintended contributions to illness and social disconnection. Examining how the design of the built environment—from homes to communal spaces, from the accessibility of green and recreational facilities to the availability of collective and health infrastructures—fosters or inhibits social well-being, encounters, friendship, and solidarity, while addressing health-related challenges such as loneliness and isolation. Addressing the effects of health-harming or health-promoting materials (e.g., pollutant exposure etc.). Reflecting on architectural and social design strategies that create neighbourhoods in response to emerging health challenges and ecological crises.

Housing and health disparities: Exploring the relationship between housing quality and mental and physical health outcomes. Assessing the physiological effects of poor housing conditions and the impact of physical housing variables (e.g., damp, mould, and extreme temperatures such as cold or heat) on respiratory and general health. Understanding the lived experiences of housing precarity and illness, with reference to health-related vulnerability, morbidity, and excess mortality in connection with housing-related factors and prevention measures (e.g., measures to prevent housing-related hospitalisations, safe access to basic infrastructures), including those exacerbated by climate change, COVID-19, and other crises. Addressing the broader implications of rising living costs, energy crises, and policy changes on housing and health – and self-managed or collective actions of mitigating the lack or failure of health/housing policies.

Housing and organic systems: Investigating the interconnectedness of humans, microbes, other non-human species, and the built environment, and their relationship to health and well-being. Assessing nature-based housing approaches that promote health and health equity through sustainable and inclusive housing practices, policies and design – going beyond lighthouse projects and facilitating long-term transdisciplinary action. Addressing the multi-species household (e.g., those including companion animals) as a means to support human, pet, and societal health. Exploring the “conditions of inhabitation” as practices of health care and repair in connection with planetary well-being.

In response to these key topics, we encourage applicants to explore commonalities and differences between communities and regions in the Global North and South, highlighting diverse perspectives on health and well-being in housing design or policy. We also explicitly encourage an intersectional approach to defining and designing housing for well-being, considering social, economic, cultural and environmental factors. In a week of exchange and collaboration, we look for responses to the key topics mentioned and invite contributions from all academic disciplines. The summer school is open for early-stage academics (predoc, postdoc) from all disciplinary contexts as well as for housing activists and representatives of housing and urban policy initiatives who want to contribute to the above-mentioned topics. During the summer school, we will discuss research findings of empirical or design-based contributions. Building on these, we will also work conceptually by example of urban areas in Vienna.

The International Summer School on New Social Housing is the successor of the IBA_ResearchLab Summer Schools which took place between 2018 and 2022, as part of the International Building Exhibition IBA_Vienna. The International Building Exhibition with the theme of New Social Housing represented a unique opportunity for the city of Vienna to consolidate its position as an international centre for the scientific research on current developments in the fields of housing. Taking up the rich experience of six summer schools and building on the renowned faculty of the IBA_ResearchLab, the Research Center for New Social Housing was launched in 2022 to continue the international and institutional networking between different disciplinary research fields of housing studies and to foster the transdisciplinary cooperation involving actors of Viennese housing production. The Research Center for New Social Housing is a collaboration of TU Wien, the University of Vienna and the University of Applied Arts Vienna. The Vienna International Summer School on New Social Housing is kindly supported by the City of Vienna, Municipal Department 50 – Strategic Projects and International Affairs.

APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

The documents to be submitted include:

- Exposé with a description of the research approach (objective/research question/ methodology) or project that will be presented (max. 750 words)
- CV and letter of motivation of the applicant (max. 3 pages)

Submit application [name_surname_NSH Summer School 25.pdf] to newsocialhousing@tuwien.ac.at

Participants (maximum 20) are selected by the Curatorial Team of the Summer School of TU Wien, University of Vienna and University of Applied Arts Vienna

COSTS AND FINANCING

No fee for Summer School participation. Travel costs will be covered (up to 300 Euros for trips within Europe / 700 Euros from outside Europe). Free accommodation will be provided.

DATES

Deadline for applications: 1 April 2025

30 April 2025 – Applicants will be informed of the faculty’s decision

1 August 2025 – Accepted papers need to be submitted in full length (maximum 7000 words)

15–19 September 2025 – Summer School in Vienna

[Optional event: 23 September 2025 –Summer School Alumni Meeting at Venice Biennale, Italy]

For more information visit the Summer School webpage of the [Research Center for New Social Housing](#)