

Urban Architecture

MSc_2 Freedom



Lewisham housing, Walter Segal and Jon Broome, 1979. Photograph © Jon Broome

Tutors

Janina Gosseye

Code	AR2AA015
Credits	15 ECTS
Location	tbd
Excursion	Yes
Costs	tbd

Project type	Other
--------------	-------

Approved Master 2 project	Yes
---------------------------	-----

Today, many people across the globe are subjected to strong, government-imposed lock-downs in response to the outbreak of a global pandemic. This condition of confinement prompts us to reflect upon the notion of freedom and ask: What does freedom mean, for whom, and how can it be defined in terms of architecture and urban design? Is freedom to be understood as giving people the ability to shape their own living environments – a ‘freedom to’ – or should it rather be understood as ‘freedom from’, for instance, government control, societal expectations, cultural codes and conventions, etc.

From the early 20th century, many architects have reflected on this question. In the 1930s, Frank Lloyd Wright, for instance, began developing Broadacre City, an urban model that was to allow Americans greater freedom by giving each citizen one acre of land. During the 1960s and 1970s, numerous conceptual models were developed that sought to give people greater agency in shaping their environment. Think, for instance, of Walter Segal’s self-build method. From the 1980s then, under neoliberalism,

individual freedom and self-expression were celebrated in architectural and urban design. Finally, from the turn of the 21st century, an increasing number of architects have subscribed to the belief that our current ‘liquid modernity’ requires flexible spatial frameworks in which change can occur, once again giving greater agency to the people.

What this short list of examples demonstrates is that the consideration of ‘freedom’ in architecture is highly dependent on the place and time in which it emerges, as well as on the understanding of freedom that someone adopts. This studio will examine what freedom (might) mean in architecture today, and how our urban environment might change as we weigh individual freedom against civil liberties and ‘the common good’. We invite students to design a work-dwelling complex in an inner-city plot that offers housing for 15-20 people. The final design should be presented in the form of a short story graphic novel that follows one day in the lives of three different users of this work-dwelling complex.