

# Call For Papers: Houses of Cards? The Rules and Institutions of Housing Illegality in Western Countries

Online Conference, 19-30 April 2021

Followed by a smaller in-person workshop, Autumn 2021

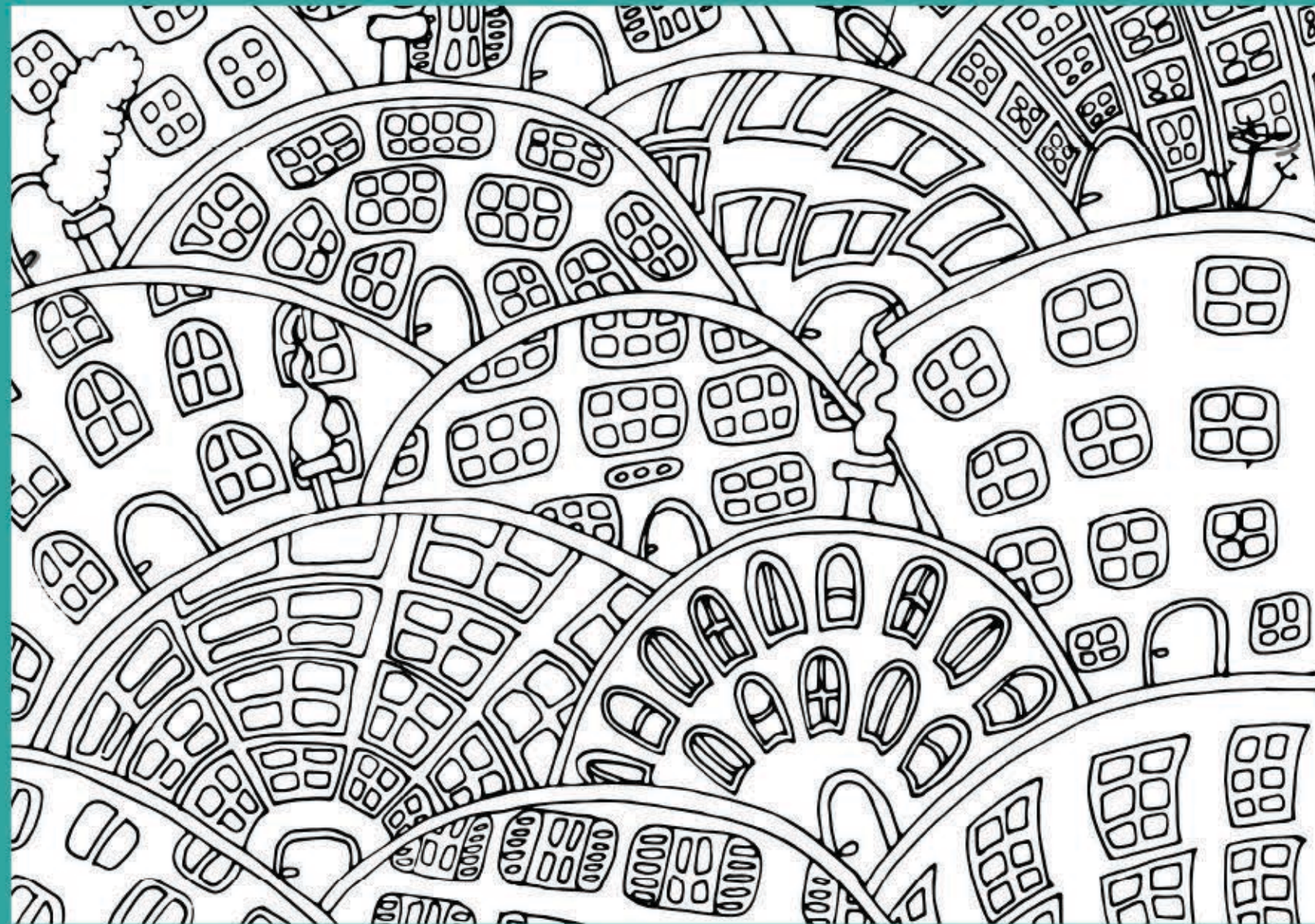


Image: Margaret Diemidova

Deadline for abstracts: 28 February 2021

While traditionally housing illegality has been associated mainly (if not exclusively) with minorities and marginalized groups (e.g. ethnic groups, homeless people), recent research in Western countries (so-called Global North) has shown a greater variety of forms of 'inhabiting outside the law' practised by a range of actors (e.g. the construction of unauthorized secondary residencies by middle-income people, outbuildings used illegally for residential accommodation of migrants, squatting of private and public empty buildings) and for different purposes (e.g. speculation, recreation, need). What these different cases have in common is their relationship with public institutions. These diverse manifestations of housing illegality, in fact, do not arise and spread in a context of lack of regulatory action by the state. Instead, these informal practices are inserted in complex relationships with different manifestations of public authority (laws, policies, civil servants' practices) and, as such, exist in a highly regulated space. Moreover, sometimes non-public regulatory actors are also involved and they contribute to set rules which complement (and sometimes replace) those established by public bodies. Therefore, housing illegality in Western countries is situated in a complex institutional environment, which is the result of the mediated interaction of different layers of public action and a variety of individual and collective practices by non-public actors (such as NGOs, inhabitants of the "illegal city", 'mobsters', advocacy groups, depending on the case). This symposium aims at investigating different kinds of housing illegality in the West (Europe, Americas and Australasia) from the viewpoint of their interaction with the broader institutional framework in which they are situated. The multifaceted connection of informal practices in the field of housing with different layers of both public (e.g. planning and building laws, practice by street-level bureaucrats) and non-public (e.g. informal rules established by criminal organizations, shared social norms in specific informal environment institutions), and the resulting politics of housing informality are under scrutiny in particular. Contributions reflecting on the changing nature of housing illegality and meanings of legal housing at times of global pandemic would also be considered.

We invite proposals for the presentations that address these and related issues. The symposium is composed of two related events. First, a virtual conference that will be held in the period between 19-30 April 2021. Second, a smaller in-person workshop at the University of Cambridge in Autumn 2021: some of the contributors presenting at the virtual conference will be invited to take part in the in-person workshop, which will finalise with the development of a scientific publication.

Please submit an abstract for a paper (up to 250 words) together with author/s names, affiliations and contact information by 28 February 2021 to Sabina Maslova ([sm2473@cam.ac.uk](mailto:sm2473@cam.ac.uk)) and Francesco Chiodelli ([francesco.chiodelli@unito.it](mailto:francesco.chiodelli@unito.it)). The decisions will be made in March 2021.

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