



TEMPORARY HOUSING: RE-USE OF AN EMPTY BUILDING IN TOULOUSE

Posted on February 18, 2020 by martabuges



Categories: [Hors-Pistes](#), [Middle Density](#), [Politics and economics](#), [Project](#), [Urban Paradigms](#)

Tags: [Adaptive reuse](#), [Community](#), [Economics](#), [Efficiency measures](#), [Emergency Housing](#), [France](#), [Low budget](#), [Political & Economic Approach](#), [Project](#), [Sustainability](#), [Temporary housing](#), [Toulouse](#), [Transformation](#), [Urban Paradigms](#)

Confronted by a growing demand for housing in urban areas, sustainable living in the future will require thinking differently about how we create more living spaces. Empty office spaces and unused, outdated real estate are ever-expanding in today's urban areas. In 2019, the service sector in France tallied 5 million square meters of available space (source: ORIE). The current economic model generates a context in which real estate speculation can create development peaks that are independent from and incoherent with the city's needs. These unused spaces can be re-qualified, reorganized, and reused. Property owners can be incentivized to allow temporary housing in unused buildings, aligning the needs of property owners who lack renters and persons/families who need a place to live.

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This project in Toulouse, France, is a good example of what we can do: facilitate the transition by providing architectural and legal support.

The re-use of a public building – a former college dormitory – that has been empty since 2015.

This building has been closed because of a reorganization of the university campus in another area of the city without a project for rehabilitation at the moment. After only one month of renovations, we transformed the space into emergency housing for 220 people, many of which are families

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(including 95 children). This emergency housing was initially scheduled to close after four months, but the project has been a real success both with the inhabitants and the neighborhood. The government decided to extend the experiment for another 12 months.



This project was put into place quickly and inexpensively, thanks to our technical analysis of the building, security standards and urban planning. The success of the test operation was also linked to the implication of the social workers who took part in planning. Insuring quality of life for the

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residents of the building was at the heart of this project.



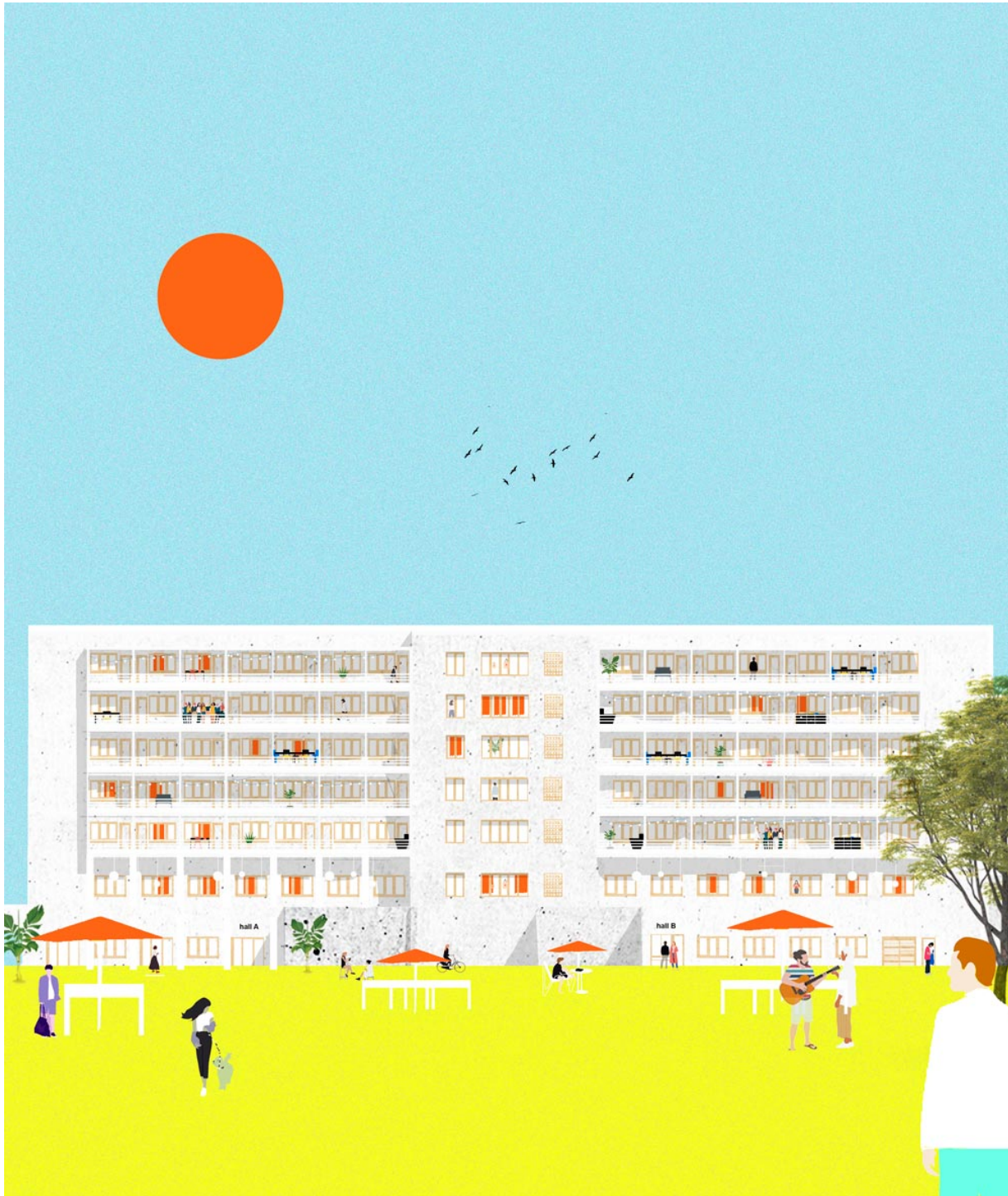
We had to deal with the emergency nature of the situation, the condition of the existing building, and security issues. Finally, we proposed two rooms for each family: a sleeping area and a living area. The kitchens and bathrooms are collective and shared by four families. The real quality of this building comes from offering two whole floors of community spaces for residents' activities.

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The next step in this project is to open these community spaces to the entire neighborhood to generate more links with the surroundings. Creating community will allow our inhabitants to truly settle in, to make a temporary home, and to build towards a better tomorrow.



Thinking differently about real estate use in urban areas is an urgent next step for the future. By finding compromise, we can respond to the needs of people on both ends of the economic spectrum. By establishing quality ephemeral housing in unused buildings, cities can move forward

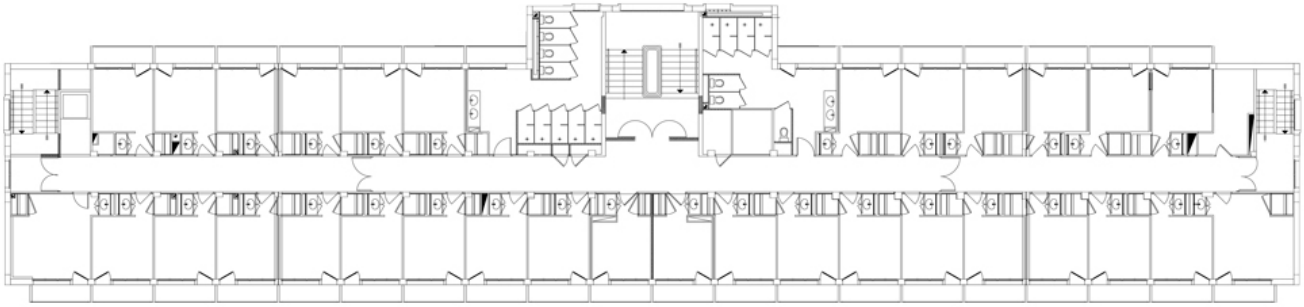
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without costly development, working with local public agencies towards this new approach to emergency housing that is also cost effective.



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