

CO-OPERATIVES – LIVING WITH WATER COLLECTIVELY

| 9-13 February 2026

| MOME Auditórium



Date: 9-13 February 2026

Venue: MOME Budapest

Co-operatives:

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BRIEF

Co-operatives are associations of a group of people with limited means in pursuit of an economic activity, where membership is voluntary and control is democratic. In the case of the housing co-operatives the economic activity is focused on the development and/ or the maintenance of a place where the collective lives. Here the ownership and management responsibilities are shared either on a permanent or temporary basis.

The origins of the co-operative movement can be traced back to the Scottish New Lanark Mills where equitable distribution of resources characterised the collective live-work arrangements as early as 1800. All co-operatives across the world still adhere to the principles laid down by the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers near Manchester in 1844. Ideals of egalitarianism, representation of individual and collective interest are key to the co-operative ideology. Early housing co-operatives such as the communes of Letchworth Garden City, religious or artist collectives, agricultural or industrial productive co-operatives are all forged around shared values and interests of communities.

The current forms of co-operative housing across the world are deeply rooted in their cultural, regulatory context and are charged by their urban, political histories. Unsurprisingly, British examples which are historically linked to the garden city movement, follow low density settlement patterns. Meanwhile in continental Europe co-operative housing almost exclusively takes shape in the form of a higher density building, regardless of the social, political and regulatory frameworks of each country. Born out of economic or social necessity, co-operatives aim at utopian ideals of collectivism while seeking independence and self-reliance. To achieve this, they are inherently mixed use.

The revival of debates around co-operative housing and various models in self-help developments today are at the crossroads of reduction of government investment in

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social housing and the dream of sustainable communal experience against urban alienation.

Living in proximity (spatial, ideologic, economic) is not without frictions or conflicts. What binds members of the co-operatives together? What are the shared resources, human and non-human infrastructures that sustain these collective ecologies? What shape do they take? How does this collective enterprise re-shape spaces of sociability both at a domestic and urban scale? How does the architecture organise, calibrate and choreograph economic, regulatory and spatial proximities at all scales?

About the programme

It is a unique interdisciplinary research and pedagogic collaboration between the Moholy-Nagy University of Arts and Design and Liverpool Architecture School's Global Housing Design Programme. The five-days programme includes a 4-days Design Sprint for university students and a public Symposium as a closing day.

During the **Co-operative DESIGN SPRINT** (9-12 February) approximately 50 students will work together in international and interdisciplinary teams to explore the diverse dimensions and intersections of the challenges of *co-operative living* and the role of water as a shared resource. From situating the topic in the context of architecture, design, anthropology and environmental psychology, through articulating different design challenges until developing concepts of possible solutions, students will examine and recreate the role of water in the self-sustaining model of co-operative housing. With social resilience at the focus students will investigate what values and cultural layers binds members of the co-operatives together. What are the shared resources, human and non-human infrastructures that sustain these collectives? How can we use water as a tool to shape spaces of sociability both at a domestic and urban scale? University students are welcome to join the Design Sprint from diverse fields of design, art, human and environmental sciences, communication etc. The teams are going to pitch their concepts on the Symposium (13 February) for an international and interdisciplinary jury: the winner team will gain valuable prizes.

The **Co-operative SYMPOSIUM** (13 February) aims to explore the question: How do we live collectively? It will bring together students, researchers, and practitioners from Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design, Liverpool Architecture School and external academic institutions to discuss the layers and aspects of co-operative dimensions in different urban contexts. Through keynotes, research and project presentations as well as open discussions, the symposium connects theory and practice, situating contemporary student projects within the past, present and future of collective housing.