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Realism and Romance

Over a decade and a half ago, Mark Fisher published Capitalist Realism. [1] In this book (I'm sure a familiar reference point for many readers), he explored some of the ways we're encouraged to accept that there is simply no alternative to capitalism. We are taught that to imagine the world otherwise is a pointless exercise in naïve utopianism, and to dismiss those who espouse anti-capitalist viewpoints as fundamentally unserious. In the years since Mark's death, this state of affairs has begun to shift a bit. In an era of protectionism, trade wars, disavowed climate collapse, and rampant ethnonationalism, the idea that things could be otherwise – or, more specifically, that they could be worse – seems to loom all around us. Capitalist realism is, at the very least, fraying around the edges.

This has not been a wholesale upending, of course. There are still numerous elements of late capitalist culture holding strong – and one of those, I believe, is our understanding of home. We know that the home, far from being a space of respite from capitalist values, is in many ways an expression of them – from property as a key means of generational wealth transfer, to domesticity's role in devaluating reproductive labour. This is, in part, why it is so necessary to imagine it otherwise. But 'home' is also freighted with particularly powerful affects and emotionally-loaded ideas about intimacy, belonging, autonomy, and so on. This is, in part, why it is so difficult to imagine it otherwise. The owner-occupied single-family home has, across many parts of the world, come to be felt as an inevitability. [2]

Riffing on Mark's work, I have described this state of affairs as domestic realism. [3] This a nod to the idea that the social and spatial relations of the home have become so ubiquitous, so naturalised, that it can seem nearly impossible to imagine life being organised through any other form. It is particularly remarkable that domestic realism continues to enjoy so much purchase over the collective imagination when one considers the fact that, for many of us, actually owning a single-family home has become a remote possibility – if not an impossible dream. There clearly are alternatives – and increasing numbers of people are living them every day.

But domestic realism is not simply an assertion that there are no other ways to live; rather, it is the claim that there are no other good ways to live, and that there can be no functional society in which life is not normatively organised around owner-occupier single-family households. Domestic realism renders everything else a poor alternative – a stop gap, a work around, an act of desperation. Those of us who do not live in this

specific way are thus encouraged either to imagine ourselves as temporarily embarrassed homeowners, or to accept our domestic lives to be failures. This is an idea that the writer and organiser Alva Gotby has picked up on in her recent work, expanding the concept of domestic realism beyond a sense of necessity or inevitability to recognise the role played by desire in its formation and perpetuation. [4] It is not simply that there is no alternative, then; it's that most people aren't even looking for an alternative.

Gotby develops the idea of domestic romance to name this phenomenon – the widespread sense that our current model of domesticity is not only inevitable but desirable. [5] It is accepted as the best possible form through which one might aspire to meet one's daily material and emotional needs. She is right to stress the personal investment involved here. As the architectural historian Dolores Hayden points out, the solidification of domestic realism in the post-war years meant that the "dream house replaced the ideal city as the spatial representation of American hopes for the good life. It not only triumphed over the model town, the dream house also prevailed over two other models of housing, one based on efficient collective consumption of scarce resources, the other based on the model neighbourhood." [6] Despite being a form with a number of significant drawbacks – it's labour intensive, it's energy intensive, it's time intensive, and that's before we even get to the various violences and inequalities with which it is associated – the dream house nevertheless retains a powerful grip on our collective desires and cultural imagination. The consequences of this are manifold and can be felt across the ideological spectrum – including within a lot of feminist thinking on domesticity, in which the general shape of the home often remains uninterrogated.

These effects can also be felt in contemporary housing activism, where a key demand is often to build more social housing. 'It's all well and good to insist on an expansion in the council-owned housing stock,' Gotby argues, but 'our demands should be focused not just on the number of homes, or even on the number of homes of a particular type of tenancy, but more fundamentally what these homes look like, and what types of lives they enable' . [7] . This is the starting point for this essay. In an era of domestic realism and domestic romance, what kind of counter-imaginaries have become available? What trends in the design of the built environment might unsettle the dominance of a certain image of home – and in what ways might they be ushering in something worse?

I want to explore these questions via the example of commercial co-living, particularly as it has been emerging in my own city of London over recent years. My contention is that co-living presents a scenario in which the financialisation of shelter pushes back against domestic realism. That is to say, it develops some of the ideological and regulatory foundations upon which alternative understandings of urban housing might emerge – but does so in a manner that is deeply problematic and very much unwelcome.

What is Co-Living?

Co-living, of the type I am referring to here, is 'a new, socially organised, commercially-driven, high density housing typology', also referred to as large-scale purpose-built shared living. [8] It is tipped as one of Europe's fastest-growing residential asset classes and has particular prevalence here in London, where we have between 20 and 25% of all the co-living beds in the continent. This is by far the largest European market by volume, with Amsterdam coming in next on the list with around 15% of the total beds. [9] As Federico Coricelli notes, 'Co-living—which first appeared in London in the early 2010s—is the umbrella name for a multiplicity of housing products developed by the tech-friendly branches of real estate'. [10] Essentially, we're talking about small, managed apartments, heavily augmented by a range of communal facilities, bookable by residents for periods of between 3 months and around one year.

To better understand what this looks like in practice, we can turn to The Collective Old Oak – one of the first (and most famous) examples of commercial co-living, which was recently sold to a private equity firm for around £60 million. [11] This scheme, in common with other co-living developments, places an emphasis on shared services, amenities and spaces. There are screening rooms, libraries and games rooms, a café bar and a laundrette, as well as visitors bedrooms set aside for use by residents' family and friends. There is a library of things containing items 'from tools and sports equipment to musical instruments and a canoe'. [12] The building's rooftop 'provides landscaped terraces that have some individual allotments as well as collective event spaces.' [13] Bills and Wi-Fi are all included (reducing some of the burdens of organisational labour and digital housework), while room cleaning and linen changes come as standard.

Recuperating Counter-Imaginaries

At first glance, this may not sound like a bad way to live. Indeed, it arguably connects with a certain idea of *public luxury* – a concept that Nick Srnicek and I develop in our book *After Work: A History of the Home and the Fight for Free Time*. [14] Instead of exclusive experiences, private indulgences, and spaces that are only accessible to a wealthy few, public luxury names a culture in which luxury is radically reconceived, and everyone shares in collectively owned, well-funded amenities and infrastructure. In a world of public luxury, people still have sufficient space and privacy to ensure their personal needs are met (a room of one's own, as it were), but this is massively augmented by a revived commons – wonderful parks and playgrounds, arts spaces, leisure centres, and so on.

Importantly, this idea of luxury is not solely attached to rest or leisure pursuits, although it is very much tangled up in the project of extending temporal sovereignty – people's ability to make meaningful choices about how to spend their time. It is also targeted at

the delivery of care and what we currently think of as domestic labour. As such, it extends to long-term care centres, reusable nappy services, nurseries, abortion clinics and other healthcare facilities, toy libraries, canteens, and so on. Public luxury is thus both a means of freeing up time, by moving elements of housework and care work beyond the domestic dwelling, and also a means of ensuring that our free time can be well spent. In offering collective kitchens and laundries, spas and libraries, gardens and café bars, maker spaces and studios, one could perhaps argue that collective co-living is a step towards this model – a move away from the isolated single-family dwelling, in favour of envisioning more communal approaches to domesticity.

Interestingly, in fact, some commentators have directly compared commercial co-living to the kinds of examples that Nick and I pull on for inspiration in the book. Journalists love nothing better than to paint co-living developments as millennial communes, [15] for example, while their architects stress the influence of a range of 'historical precedents and collective living typologies [...] from Robert Owen's utopian paternalism at New Lanark to monastic communities and almshouses'. [16]

Housing researchers, meanwhile, have written about the connections between commercial co-living and things like the American apartment hotel of the early 1900s, the Victorian gentleman's club, or European social housing – all examples of domesticity stepping over the threshold, as it were, via particular aspects of social reproduction being socialised. [17] Peter Lewis likens Vienna's post-war public housing to modern co-living, for example, arguing that the combination of residential dwellings with 'lush planting, tennis courts and schools, offers a tantalising idea of co-living's potential. In such a place it is easy to imagine how the typology could create the lifestyles developers are selling.' [18] To me, this all sounds rather appealing. Perhaps Londoners should be moving into co-living spaces ASAP? Perhaps a great wave of public luxury is about to break over the capital, sweeping in from Willesden Junction and ousting outdated ideas of domestic realism in the process?

I'm sceptical. Despite the mantle of radicality being cast over co-living by various parties, it is clear that it represents a recuperation of emancipatory domestic alternatives rather than an extension of their underlying aims. As Tom Harrad notes, words like "common" and "collective," which are often thrown around in relation to co-living, 'imply ownership, responsibility, cooperation, freedom. They come weighed down with historical connotations—from forced land enclosures to the counterculture movement.' [19] Creative professionals find themselves 'attracted to these inauthentic capitalist shadows of progressive spaces because genuine progressive spaces in London are now almost nonexistent. The criminalisation of residential squatting in 2012 effectively ended the possibility of young people starting cohabitation projects in the city without serious financial investment.' [20] Emerging from a profound crisis in housing affordability, schemes like The Collective seek to absorb the energy of experimental

communities and politically conscious forms of cohabitation, in order to package it up as a ready-made, rentable commodity, allowing developers to extract maximum revenue from minimal space.

So, while we can indeed see a shift in emphasis away from isolated private spaces, owner-occupation, and the nuclear family here, I would argue that what we are witnessing is (at best) a kind of monkey's paw version of public luxury. We wished for more communal ways of living and for an alternative to domestic realism, and sure, commercial co-living offers us that, but it does so in a horribly twisted manner – one that not only accelerates gentrification and repackages unaffordable housing as a "lifestyle choice", but which also relies upon a thoroughly depoliticised vision of community.

Frictionless Proximity: Community as a Service

There are numerous general criticisms levelled at co-living, and I do not wish to rehearse them all here. However, allow me to pause for a moment on its vision of community, because the recuperation and commodification of this idea is really at the heart of the co-living business model. The primary amenity being provided by these developments is arguably not co-working spaces or podcasting studios or cinema rooms or wellness centres, but residents themselves. As Tegan L Bergan and Emma R Power put it, commercial co-living 'reaches beyond practices aimed at realising the value of real estate property, to practices that realise the value of residents, household forms, experiences and domestic relationships,' with the household and its inhabitants 'becoming the central arena for extracting value, rather than only the physical real estate the household sits upon.' [21] "Community" is part of the commodity being accessed here. But the idea of friends and neighbours so often leveraged in co-living's marketing is less a matter of human connection or the eradication of urban loneliness than of weaponised social networking.

Interaction is seen not as a source of pleasure or an end in itself, but as a matter of career development and professional advancement – an extension of hustle culture. The website for Folk co-living, for example, tells us that 'Opportunity lies in every one of our shared spaces', [22] and directly addresses London's young professionals: 'Bringing you together with like-minded people in a productive environment, co-living is a perfect platform to hit the ground running in your new career.' [23] The Co-Living Group, meanwhile – which 'acquires and re-purposes spaces to create [...] standardised co-living accommodation' [24] – argues that the 'concept of co-living lends itself to building mutually beneficial business connections'. [25] The very idea of community is being put to work here – repurposed as a service, and evacuated of any content beyond the self-interested activation of people as human resources to be utilised. [26]

It is this, in part, which makes co-living's pretensions toward urbanity – frequently stressed in the sector's self-framing – so laughable. Co-living in general is very invested in notions of the creative city; the Collective Old Oak even explicitly envisions its building and its residents as a form of micro-metropolis. Andrei Martin, its lead architect, notes that 'at the scale of the whole development [...] there are sufficient people to trigger what the design team calls a "metropolitan moment" where the building begins to act as a section of a city' [27] . But the idea that commercial co-living can represent a space of urban encounter – in the sense of any kind of spontaneous polyvocality – strikes me as a profound misrepresentation. This is for two reasons. Firstly, co-living romanticises the "metropolitan moment" while keeping actual difference and unexpected encounter at bay through the curation of a largely self-selecting monoculture. This is based on, a) residents having the lifestyle and economic means to engage in commercial co-living in the first place, and b) on them being the kind of people who would willingly subscribe to a general WeLive/WeWork-type zeitgeist.

Secondly, there is no *friction* in this domestic-urban imaginary; there can't be, because friction presupposes some form of deep or sustained (and potentially painful) contact. It is generated by things coming together, rubbing up against each other. Certainly, the 'abstract idea of the unplanned, informal, messy urban encounter is one of the ways that co-living firms promote their approach to residential space-making', but as Tim White and David Madden have noted, the "'encounters" that happen in co-living buildings are anything but informal. They rely on paid social managers, design features, and the social exclusivity created by paid membership.' [28] Co-living is not really selling community, then, with all its pleasure and tensions, but rather the promise of frictionless proximity – an imagined state that does not necessarily sit well with the idea of urban interface. Presumably the "metropolitan moment" is to be understood as a scale of interaction – one that enables forms of encounter not afforded by other typologies. But in practice, the level of community curation and stage management involved – from the programming of events to the design of spaces to the setting of rent levels and the endless, telling references to "likeminded individuals"– seems to actively suppress the possibility of unexpected forms of connection. Indeed, with their 'security guards, FOB access and exclusive amenities, co-living buildings are in essence vertical gated communities'. [29] It is striking, for instance, that for all their apparent interest in urban connection, they are typically rather inward looking, prioritising networking between residents over connections with the wider community. Aside from allowing people to spend money in their coffee shops or pay to access their co-working spaces, such buildings rarely show any interest in acting as more public resources. They do not seem to see themselves as anything like neighbourhood hubs or potential anchor institutions, for example.

That these gated communities mitigate against the "metropolitan moment" they claim to design for is further reflected in the homogeneity of the household forms that they enable. As Zachariah Michielli reminds us, 'The basic premise of these co-living apartments is that units be subdivided to the smallest individually rentable spaces: single bedrooms [...] All but excluded from this model is the family unit; adding to one's family would require a collection of rooms to be rented individually thus prescribing a precisely curated community.' [30] While Michielli is writing about a particular co-living development in New York City, however, we can make even stronger claims about the homogeneity of domestic arrangements in London's co-living spaces. According to Martin, negotiating the Collective Old Oak 'through the planning system and other regulations was a lengthy process of approximately two years [...] As part of these negotiations, a Section 106 planning agreement was put in place that limits occupants to graduate students or professionals. Children and undergraduates could not be accommodated.' [31] Not only does this development anticipate single-person (or at most, dual-person) households, then – it *insists* upon them. This is a particularly stark indication of where commercial co-living is at odds with domestic realism. It proffers a vision of the household as a carefree, solitary resident-guest, immersed in a pseudo-community of other carefree, solitary resident-guests. And this is packaged as a desirable way to live – as something akin to public luxury!

Selling Togetherness

Clearly, the version of domesticity at stake here is neither truly public nor particularly luxurious. But that doesn't mean it can't proffer a counter-imaginary of domesticity – one that prompts us not just to question the dominance of the owner-occupied single-family home, but to reconsider multiple occupancy-renting as well. As Jonathan Mak remarks, co-living companies are effectively trying to 'repackage rooming houses, a stigmatized and maligned form of housing, into an "authentic" and "community-oriented" experience for higher-income young professionals in the "creative city"'. [32] This is a pretty substantial undertaking. Associated in 'various housing systems with bedsits, flophouses, Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels, Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) and other stigmatised residential forms, multiple occupancy almost always indicates the lower rungs of housing hierarchies.' [33] In attempting to sell co-living to digital nomads with entrepreneurial ambitions, the sector finds itself rewriting these scripts and pushing against the contours of contemporary domestic romance.

In order to 'establish the economic viability of their subsector in the longer term,' in other words, co-living's 'proponents must create a new way of understanding housing, where multiple-occupant tenancy is seen not as a mark of failure in an individualistic, property-centric housing system'. [34] The co-living industry has had to push back against the assumption that there can be no alternative image of the domestic good life other

than that offered by the owner-occupied single-family home. This push back is happening in all sorts of ways – through promotional discourse, through design practices, through the interpellation of short-term, insecure renters as aspirational resident-guests – but perhaps one particularly striking development in terms of shifting material hegemony comes in co-living's engagement with regulatory structures. As we've seen, the development of The Collective Old Oak involved extensive consultation with the Greater London Authority. Martin refers to 'a lengthy process of developing and negotiating legislative and planning frameworks and standards for this new typology, for which no legislation previously existed.' [35] In the years since The Collective Old Oak went up, co-living has become institutionalised to some extent, but it was only last year that the GLA published its 'Large-scale purpose-built shared living London Plan Guidance'. [36] Through its ongoing emergence, the commercial co-living scene is continuing to actively reshape the ways in which housing is being thought in the city.

Given its many flaws – not least its impoverished interpretation of public luxury – this is clearly not something to celebrate. Commercial co-living is marked out by its cynical repurposing of more progressive socio-spatial ambitions. On the surface, it 'offers a democratic, communal, emancipatory urban future. In reality, it helps funnel more housing and urban space toward largescale, for-profit investors'. [37] However, the forms of recuperation in action here are not the end of the story. Repurposing, I would argue, is never a uni-directional process, but is in fact an ongoing autophagic dynamic, in which that which has been appropriated becomes available to be appropriated in its turn. This means that "our" imaginaries, our projects, our languages can be turned against us in the interests of capital, but it is also generative of opportunities – opportunities via which we might put the tools of our enemies to work in the service of our interests. This is a kind of recuperation from below – an admittedly uneven process, constrained by imbalances in power, influence, and resource, but one which nevertheless invites us to ask certain questions of our current moment. What unexpected resources might commercial co-living lend us in terms of building better kinds of counter-hegemonic alternatives? What, if anything, can we repurpose from its repurposing, recoup from its recuperation? I don't have the answers to these questions, but I can perhaps offer a handful of assorted provocations to close.

Domestic Realism, Commercial Co-Living, or Something Better?

One possible approach to positioning commercial co-living to our advantage might be to revisit Gotby's concerns about social housing and the domestic romance of the post-war welfare state. How might co-living (as a rapidly solidifying urban typology) be leveraged in, for example, attempts to reimagine the council house or the municipal estate? Lobbying for different – or indeed, any – social housing is no easy task in this day and age, but as Lewis notes, councils will soon 'have to build homes for a much more

diverse population than [they] did half a century ago, and co-living could form a vital and interesting part of their housing stock.' [38] In his (admittedly rather optimistic) assessment, local authorities are best placed to 'provide the stability needed to build and manage co-living, while simultaneously placing a sense of social purpose at its heart to free the typology from the banality of developer-led housing. Under these conditions exciting architectural responses to the blurred thresholds between private, communal and public life may begin to emerge.' [39]

Of course, marrying social housing and co-living could also result in something worse – we are never free of the monkey's paw dynamic of spatial repurposing. Under current conditions, public landlords have 'at least a short-term interest in neglecting the needs of their tenants, and preserving their money and resources'. [40] (They are still landlords, after all.) With a certain amount of spin and a few hasty additions, it's all too easy to imagine them rebadging isolated, poorly converted office blocks (of the sort currently being used for low-quality temporary accommodation) as innovative co-living developments. However, if we accept the fact that the single-family home is not necessarily a desirable environment for every domestic configuration, then there is still a great deal to be gained from thinking about the diversification of municipal housing stock. Could commercial co-living be a springboard via which to agitate for new kinds of social housing, in which the domestic sphere is infused with ideas of public luxury? I'm imagining developments in which bars and games rooms and cinema spaces are augmented by, say, early years childcare centres or homework clubs; where the wellness centre offerings go beyond rooftop yoga to include grief counselling, sexual and reproductive healthcare, HRT advice desks, physiotherapy for older people, and on-site dental treatment.

In short, I am curious about if and how we might piggy-back on the momentum that commercial co-living has built up around itself. Can we use the sector's strategic efforts to loosen the grip of domestic romance to help make more emancipatory demands for housing alternatives seem both more desirable and more commonsensical? The form might, despite itself, lend us certain ideational resources in arguing for the simultaneous diversification and decommodification of shelter (ideas anathema to domestic realism). The very concept of co-living pushes against the idea that the single-family home is the only desirable, appropriate, or possible form of domestic arrangement, and of necessity promotes the fact that there are other ways to live. As Coricelli remarks, 'On the one hand, it is not capable of solving the housing crisis or transforming co-living into an affordable housing model. On the other hand, it can be understood as a laboratory for understanding the collective spaces of the contemporary city.' [41] Turning a re-purposeful eye toward commercial co-living is thus, at the very least, an intriguing imaginative exercise in reparative politics – a means of insisting that the spaces of today be leveraged towards a different tomorrow.

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4. Alva Gotby, Feeling at Home: Transforming the Politics of Housing (London: Verso, 2025) ↩
5. ibid ↩
6. Dolores Hayden, Grand Domestic Revolution: History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighbourhoods and Cities (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), p. 55 ↩
7. Alva Gotby, Feeling at Home: Transforming the Politics of Housing (London: Verso, 2025), pp. 7-8 ↩
8. Andrei Martin, 'Urban Co-Living as an Emerging Typology: The Collective Old Oak, London'. *University of Westminster,* 2021, p. 3. https://westminsterresearch.westminster.ac.uk/download/f474c78c9711971ffcdbce5087cd767daad88dd4219cf332841cc03ed6e2a74b/4339166/7.Andrei-Martin*Westminster-Architecture-REF-Folio*2021-2.pdf ↩
9. JLL, 'European Coliving Index', 2019. https://www.jll.de/content/dam/jll-com/documents/pdf/research/emea/jll-european-coliving-index-2019.pdf ↩
10. Federico Coricelli, 'The Co-'s of Co-Living: How the Advertisement of Living Is Taking Over Housing Realities'. *Urban Planning* 7:1, 2022, pp. 296–304, p. 296 ↩
11. See George Sell, ' Private equity firm to buy The Collective Old Oak Common for £60 million'. *Urban Living News*, February 2025. https://urbanliving.news/coliving/private-equity-firm-to-buy-the-collective-old-oak-common-for-60-million/ ↩
12. Andrei Martin, 'Urban Co-Living as an Emerging Typology: The Collective Old Oak, London'. *University of Westminster,* 2021, p. 13. https://westminsterresearch.westminster.ac.uk/download/f474c78c9711971ffcdbce5087cd767daad88dd4219cf332841cc03ed6e2a74b/4339166/7.Andrei-Martin*Westminster-Architecture-REF-Folio*2021-2.pdf ↩
13. ibid, p. 17 ↩

14. Helen Hester and Nick Srnicek, *After Work: A History of the Home and the Fight for Free Time* (London: Verso, 2023) ↩

15. See Kashmira Gander, 'Communal living: Meet the millennials living and networking in modern communes'. *The Independent,* July 2016. https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/communal-living-meet-the-millennials-living-and-networking-in-modern-communes-a7131341.html . Samuel Fishwick, 'The Collective: Inside London's most luxurious commune'. *The Standard*, September 2016. https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/the-collective-inside-london-s-most-luxurious-commune-a3333526.html; Molly Wood, 'Co-living startups: The commune is back, but for profit'. *Marketplace*, June 2016. https://www.marketplace.org/story/2016/06/02/co-living-startups-commune-back-profit ↩

16. Andrei Martin, 'Urban Co-Living as an Emerging Typology: The Collective Old Oak, London'. *University of Westminster,* 2021, p. 9. https://westminsterresearch.westminster.ac.uk/download/f474c78c9711971ffcdbce5087cd767daad88dd4219cf332841cc03ed6e2a74b/4339166/7.Andrei-Martin*Westminster-Architecture-REF-Folio*2021-2.pdf ↩

17. See Tegan L. Bergan, Andrew Gorman-Murray and Emma R. Power, 'Co-Living, Gentlemen's Clubs, and Residential Hotels: A Long View of Shared Housing Infrastructures for Single Young Professionals'. *Housing, Theory and Society* 40:5, 2023, pp. 679-694; Peter Lewis, 'How to make co-living serve people before profit', *The RIBA Journal*, 2020. https://www.ribaj.com/culture/co-living-peter-lewis-ribaj-future-architects-writing-competition; Jonathan Mak, *Making Room for Whom? Co-Living as a Reinevntion of Rooming Houses for the Commodified City*, Masters of Planning In Urban Development, Ryerson University, 2020 ↩

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19. Tom Harrad, 'This new co-living space is the dystopian symptom of a London failing young people'. *i-D*, June 2017. https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/43xgx9/this-new-co-living-space-is-the-dystopian-symptom-of-a-london-failing-young-people ↩

20. ibid. ↩

21. Tegan L Bergan and Emma R Power, 'Microgeographies of assetisation: Realising value of households and residents in co-living housing'. *EPA: Economy and Space*, 56:5, 2024, pp. 1385–1400, p. 1387 ↩

22. Folk, ‘Folk at Florence Dock’, n.d.: https://www.folkcoliving.com/homes/florence-dock ↩

23. Folk, ‘Why Co-Living is Perfect for London’s Young Professionals’, n.d. https://www.folkcoliving.com/journal/1404-why-co-living-is-a-great-option-for-young-professionals ↩

24. Co-Living Group, ‘About Us’, n.d.https://co-living.group/about ↩

25. Co-Living Group, ‘The Benefits of Co-Living for Young Professionals’, n.d.https://co-living.group/blog/benefits-co-living-young-professionals/ ↩

26. While I am keen to highlight the reduction of community to a shallow and self-serving caricature here, I do not wish to fetishise some idea of “true community”. There is a longer, earlier draft of this essay, in fact, which compares commercial co-living with co-housing – another housing form in which residential dwellings share common spaces and facilities, but one more typically characterised by participative management arrangements and greater resident involvement. Here, living together is more likely to be grounded in common values, a commitment to live according to agreed principles, or an investment in the communal organisation of domestic work. While this arguably has the advantage of fostering new forms of subjectivity and increasing people’s collective agency over how they live, it is important to note that such benefits are to some extent offset by profound challenges. Despite forming part of a self-directed project, the negotiation of domestic collaboration can be effortful, time consuming, emotionally demanding, and often boring. Having a shared stake in something and in each other, working and living closely, can and will produce friction. It is completely understandable that many people will prefer a domestic imaginary in which interpersonal tension is minimised as far as possible, even if that means having less of a direct say in how one lives. Nevertheless, however, I maintain that the myth of community being leveraged in commercial co-living’s marketing discourse is at odds with the kinds of culture that these developments actually foster. We can acknowledge that relational connection often happens through and not despite conflict – while also stressing that this version of home is not for everyone. ↩

27. Andrei Martin, ‘Urban Co-Living as an Emerging Typology: The Collective Old Oak, London’. *University of Westminster,* 2021, p. 13. https://westminsterresearch.westminster.ac.uk/download/f474c78c9711971ffcdbce5087cd767daad88dd4219cf332841cc03ed6e2a74b/4339166/7.Andrei-Martin*Westminster-Architecture-REF-Folio*2021-2.pdf ↩

28. Tim White and David Madden, 'Housing ideology and urban residential change: The rise of co-living in the financialized city'. *EPA: Economy and Space* 56:5, 2024, pp. 1368–1384, p. 1376 ↩

29. ibid ↩

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