

Kenny Cupers, *The Social Project: Housing Postwar France*, (University of Minnesota Press, 2014)

The suburban environments of postwar France—those peripheral territories of housing slabs, towers, and megastructures—have commanded much attention in recent years, as sites in which we might find the twentieth-century’s utopian impulses *and* their social consequences dramatically condensed in architectural forms. But before Kenny Cuper’s superb urban history, *The Social Project: Housing Postwar France*, that attention was in many ways blind to the actual actors, materials, confrontations, and aspirations that brought this periphery into being. With a broad narrative scope that extends across three postwar decades, and a precise explication of the myriad details of the archive, Cupers has revealed the complex field of experimentation that accompanied these projects. He demonstrates that far from being the imposition of a preconceived dogma, these projects resulted instead from the fully-invested efforts of a range of expert disciplines, civic participants, construction firms, and inhabitants. In recent years, we have come to realize that a sophisticated understanding of these architectural environments is in fact a matter of some urgency. With its fluent and compelling interpretations of materials including architectural form, sociological studies, and popular media, *The Social Project* reorients our understanding of the disciplinary efforts of architectural modernism in the technocratic milieu of the twentieth century.

Committee:

Timothy Hyde, Chair

Phil Jacks

Jorge Otero-Pailos