



# Co-Living, Gentlemen’s Clubs, and Residential Hotels: A Long View of Shared Housing Infrastructures for Single Young Professionals

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## ABSTRACT

Shared housing is an important infrastructure for young single professionals living and working in the city. Co-living is a contemporary shared housing infrastructure. But it certainly is not the first. We advocate for what Flanagan and Jacobs (2019) call taking a “long view” by drawing connections between early 19<sup>th</sup>-century gentlemen’s clubs, mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century residential hotels and contemporary co-living. We argue each have been dynamic infrastructures of mobility, work, and sociality that make certain practices more or less possible and reflect on how the socio-material form of these infrastructures connects with the infrastructural work it does. We draw on our own research study into co-living, connecting our findings with research on the historical housing types. Our findings show that shrinking private spaces, maximizing productive spaces, and integrating services are strategies that animate the infrastructural work of these housing types. By linking co-living with historical housing types, we demonstrate the importance of taking a “long view” when thinking infrastructurally about novel housing practices.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 17 January 2023  
Accepted 13 August 2023

## KEYWORDS

Co-living; gentlemen’s clubs; hotel-living; thinking infrastructurally; new infrastructural scholarship; shared housing

## Introduction

Sharing housing with non-kin is a common practice amongst young people living and working in Anglophone cities (Heath et al. 2018). Shared housing can be a form of accommodation that is affordable, social and proximate to work opportunities. A range of shared housing forms and practices have been identified in research (Heath et al. 2018); they have usually been assessed as distinct forms specific to the economic and social milieu they emerge within. We argue shared housing should be viewed along a continuum, as an infrastructural form that has enabled shared living in ways that meet particular social and economic objectives over time. Our paper is motivated by media depictions of co-living housing as a distinct or “novel” housing form (Semuels 2015). While co-living certainly contains novel elements we situate it within a longer trajectory of shared housing forms in this paper. Our approach to advancing this argument is to adopt an infrastructural

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perspective and take a “long view” towards shared housing (Flanagan and Jacobs 2019). Our purpose in developing this argument is to deepen understanding of the role and forms of shared housing in Anglophone cities and the infrastructural role it has played in the developing socio-economic milieu since industrialization.

Infrastructures are the foundations of social organization – allowing certain events or practices to materialize more easily, while resisting others (Star 1999). To think infrastructurally is to engage with the world-making work of infrastructure – recognizing what it is about the infrastructure that enables practices, and tracing the consequences of these relations over time and space. Three key conceptual foundations shared across new infrastructural scholarship are that infrastructure is: a socio-material pattern, generative, and relational (Power and Mee 2020; Bergan & Power, Under Review). These three dimensions of infrastructure underpin its ability to order and organize social life, which they do by making certain social, economic and cultural practices more or less possible. For housing researchers specifically, this is an approach to conceptualizing the work of housing – of how housing and the many systems and objects that constitute it organize and support the reproduction of social, economic and political practices across time and space (Bergan & Power, Under Review). In this paper we take a “long view” to thinking infrastructurally about shared housing – we consider what it is about the patterns and practices of shared housing that enable it to connect with social, economic and political practices over time, particularly those of work, mobility and sociality.

We argue that the infrastructural work of housing is incisively revealed by taking a “long view” (Flanagan and Jacobs 2019). Taking a “long view” of housing does not necessarily require extended historical research; rather it can involve approaching contemporary housing infrastructures with nuance and historical sensibility. As described by Flanagan and Jacobs (2019, 196)

taking a long view can also be about recognizing that like past events, current policies and theories do not occur outside time – they are as temporally situated, contingent and contextual as things that happened years ago ... When the long view is taken, its value is clear ... there are many examples of housing scholarship that has used “a historical sensibility” to make explicit the connections between the past and the present, to overcome policy amnesia, to demonstrate the interdependence between institutions, events and policies and wider currents of social and economic change, to illuminate the contingency of current truisms and to develop, in Foucault’s phrase, “histories of the present”.

To advance our argument about the infrastructural work of shared housing, we investigate three distinct urban shared housing forms and identify the affordances created through their socio-material arrangement. We focus on co-living housing, 19th-century gentlemen’s clubs, and 20th-century residential hotels.

The paper is organized as follows. First, we briefly overview new infrastructural approaches in housing studies and identify “thinking infrastructurally” as key to understanding how urban housing forms articulate with wider social and economic processes. Second, we outline our methodology for thinking infrastructurally about co-living, gentlemen’s clubs and residential hotels. Third, we reveal how the sociomaterial pattern of these three infrastructures are arranged to afford productive labour for urban professionals. We show that arranging household spaces, recoding the accepted “uses” of domestic spaces and layering services have allowed these housing infrastructures to help young people navigate life and labour in the city since Industrialization. Our analysis draws on a mixed-

method research study exploring co-living housing in New York City (NYC), San Francisco and Australia between 2016–2022. Research methods for this project included a thematic content analysis of co-living websites in 2017 that explored the marketed meanings and practices of home (Bergan, Gorman-Murray, and Power 2021), a series of semi-structured interviews with industry stakeholders in 2018–2019, and a thematic content analysis of co-living sector websites and interpretative policy analysis of the relevant housing and health policies during the COVID-19 pandemic (Bergan and Dufty-Jones 2023). These empirical data are compared with secondary sources that examine gentlemen’s clubs and residential hotels.

## Housing as Infrastructure

Infrastructures are important to understanding social life. The social world is bound to itself, tethered, and supported – however contingently – through infrastructures (Berlant 2016). Infrastructures are the grounds against which certain processes and actions are made more or less possible. New infrastructural analyses allow housing to be understood as a socio-technical system that relationally constructs, (re)produces, and reworks patterns of how we live, work, move and connect (Power and Mee 2020; Power et al. 2022). Individual houses/homes and broader housing systems are increasingly being conceptualized as infrastructure (Power and Mee 2020; Bergan & Power, Under Review). Conceptualizing housing as infrastructure entails uncovering it as a dynamic socio-material pattern, that is generative and relational (Bergan & Power, Under Review). These key dimensions essentially mean that infrastructure is a recognizable system, does something, and is understood in relation to what it does (Power and Mee 2020). New infrastructural scholarship has unsettled the idea that infrastructure is “simply the backdrop or context to where the real action is” (Latham and Wood 2015, 303), instead recognizing how infrastructures shape social action in their own right. Thinking infrastructurally provides a platform to question how houses

... co-constitute urban social life, making it clear that sociality is “never reducible to the purely human alone”. (Power and Mee 2020, 138)

In this paper we examine how the socio-material pattern of shared housing intimately connects with its infrastructural work. Our approach of thinking infrastructurally by taking a long view helps to challenge some of the tendencies for contemporary types of shared housing to be seen as radically innovative and novel. To do this we situate co-living in a long lineage of shared housing infrastructures.

## Thinking Infrastructurally About Shared Housing

In common amongst the broad typology of shared housing forms is a tendency for Anglophone societies to see it as “less” ideal than a single-family dwelling (Jarvis 2013). The normative portrayal of sharing a house with non-kin is constructed as innately odd (Heath et al. 2018; Jarvis 2013). The “oddness” of roommates has been a long-running theme in literature and popular culture – for instance, the TV shows *The Odd Couple* (US), *The Young Ones* (UK), *Friends* (US) or *Five Bedrooms* (Australia). However, for many, self-contained, single-family occupied housing is also odd. It increases the

burden of income-generating activities and other activities of daily life such as care work (Jarvis 2013). Not to mention the reality that single-family houses generate excessive greenhouse emissions during our climate emergency (Hilder et al. 2018). However, despite the mismatch between single-family housing and economic, social and environmental rationalities (Cohen 2021), it is still aspirational in Anglophone societies.

Thinking infrastructurally about housing requires asking what it is about the housing form that allows it to hold up broader economic, political, and social practices. For shared housing, this involves asking how sharing a house with non-kin operates as a practice in and of itself but also exists *in relation* to other practices. To understand how shared houses result from the social world while simultaneously reproducing it, we must look at how it has evolved. This requires thinking about shared housing forms together, identifying how shared housing has evolved to support different social practices and needs. In this framework we understand the changing forms and practices of shared housing as akin to infrastructural hardware and software updates – they are part of the “debugging” of infrastructures so that they can continue as a valuable apparatus of patterning labour and life deemed acceptable (Berlant 2016). Shared housing has been seen as valuable for diverse groups over time, however, the form of that housing and the needs that it services have changed. Uncovering these practices, their continuities and specificities over time is made possible through taking an infrastructural long view.

Thinking infrastructurally requires a commitment to taking a long view and tracing the infrastructure across time. The ways that infrastructures run underneath the social world are dynamic. Infrastructures are changeable; they break down, parts fail, or the arrangement of elements becomes obsolete (Appel et al., 2018; Furlong, 2011). Infrastructural affordances are inherently dynamic; what infrastructures offer changes in concert with social practices and actions that are always far from static. Infrastructures are contingent and temporally fragile; they can decay and disassemble if the affordances they offer are no longer fit for purpose or the sets of actors involved change (Bergan & Power, Under Review). By tracing, we avoid looking at infrastructures as fixed; instead, they are malleable. A temporal fragility intrinsic to infrastructure must be traced over time to be understood. Rather than taking the current forms of shared housing as independent infrastructural innovations and defining them by their “end” use, we argue the need to take a more expansive view and interrogate the causes and trajectories of its emergence in order to contextualize it and attend to the various interruptions, repairs and adjustments made to sustain the infrastructure.

A more expansive view of infrastructure does more than consider its “end” use; it considers how it has progressed, been abandoned, decayed, rejigged or adjusted (Gupta 2018; Ramakrishnan, O’Reilly, and Budds 2021). Infrastructural things are “necessarily fragile ... depending on local and situated contingencies” (Star 1999, 387). Tracing infrastructural affordances allows us to watch how they mutate and evolve in response to local conditions and events. In the next section, we think infrastructurally about shared housing since industrialization. We do so by tracing how gentlemen’s clubs, residential hotels and co-living are arranged to articulate with broader processes of labour and life in urban spaces. In the following section, we outline the methodology that informed this work.

## Co-Living, Gentlemen's Clubs and Hotel-Living: Thinking Infrastructurally About Shared Housing

### *Methodology*

Conducted between 2016–2022, our study has traced the emergence, maturation and transformation of the co-living industry in NYC, San Francisco and Australia through a mixed methods approach. This included a thematic analysis of the websites and marketing materials used by providers in the sector in 2017–2018 (Bergan, Gorman-Murray, and Power 2021); in-depth qualitative interviews with service providers in NYC, San Francisco, and Australia in 2018–19 (Bergan & Power, Under Review); and thematic analysis of sector marketing and communications in the first six months of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, overlaid with an interpretive policy analysis of housing and health policies governing the sector in NYC (Bergan and Dufty-Jones 2023). Websites were identified through Google Searches and co-living directory listings. The inclusion criteria was that organizations had to self-identify as a co-living housing organization, be currently operating in the case study cities, and have a publicly available website. NCapture (a Google Chrome Plug in) was used to scrape the websites and directly import them into NVivo. Both text and images were collected and analysed. NVivo was used to conduct manifest and latent coding of the websites. The coding framework emerged during analysis in both 2018 and 2020. Our previous research has focused on the specific relationships between co-living and social practices, for example, we investigated how co-living housing involves reshaping: legal relationships between people and housing, household materialities, meanings and cultures of home, residential mobility, and household practices supporting productive work and domestic sociality (Bergan, Gorman-Murray, and Power 2021; Bergan and Dufty-Jones 2023; Bergan & Power, Under Review). This paper reflects on the nature of co-living as infrastructure – tying the various ways that co-living orders and organizes social life together with an infrastructural framework.

A broader literature review on shared housing that framed our early research on co-living revealed that while some things are new and novel about co-living, there are also commonalities and continuities between co-living and earlier urban shared housing forms. Our methodological design took a “long view” of housing by comparing and contrasting our primary data on co-living with secondary sources. Taking a long view can involve approaching contemporary housing infrastructures with a historical sensibility that makes ‘explicit the connections between past and the present . . . to demonstrate the interdependence between institutions, events and policies and wider currents of social and economic change (Flanagan and Jacobs 2019). In our work this historical lens has identified gentlemen’s clubs and residential hotels as having continuity with co-living housing.

Like co-living, gentlemen’s clubs and residential hotels had a heavy focus on productivity for urban workers in “new” knowledge economy industries (publishing for gentlemen’s clubs and administrative or secretariat work for residential hotels – cf. Bren 2021; Milne-Smith 2006), and supporting domestic sociality for individuals living separate from a heteronormative nuclear family (Groth, 1994). Our focus in this paper is tracing how these infrastructures created affordances for social and economic life

over time. We have drawn on literature analysing marketing materials, media articles and historical records to do this. Literature on gentlemen's clubs analyses historical sources including club periodicals (magazines dedicated to gentlemen's clubs), newspaper articles, poetry and poems, fiction written at the time, and first-hand diaries (cf. Milne-Smith 2006). The literature on residential hotels similarly analyses first hand diary entries, media articles, and hotel advertisements (Bren 2021; Groth, 1994). The media articles and historical records reviewed in these literatures typically reveal the socio-material layout (include the fixtures, spatial layouts, services included membership conditions etc), and the marketing materials or first-hand accounts would speak to what affordances the housing type was trying to make "more possible". In what follows we draw on these materials to set out the infrastructural work of the three shared housing forms that are our focus: co-living, gentlemen's clubs and residential hotels. We then synthesize across these housing forms to reflect on continuities in shared housing infrastructures.

### ***Co-Living Housing as Infrastructure***

Co-living housing is a relatively new housing industry that has experienced a meteoric rise in urban real estate markets (Bergan and Dufty-Jones 2023; Bergan, Gorman-Murray, and Power 2021). Co-living emerged against a backdrop of chronically unaffordable and unsuitable housing stock, radical reworkings of standard labour relations, and outsourcing of care from the state. Co-living is one of a suite of new housing types and practices that have emerged in response to the contentious relationship between millennial professionals and urban housing. Micro-living, flexible property guardianship, shared room housing are all examples of how new housing practices have attempted to accommodate precarity (cf. Nasreen and Ruming 2019). Co-living was first sparked by the early 2000s "dot.com" recession, catalysed by the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC) (Bergan, Gorman-Murray, and Power 2021), and then reinvented during the COVID-19 pandemic (Bergan and Dufty-Jones 2023). The sector advertises housing and workspaces for "affluent transient professionals" (Hilder et al. 2018, 13) priced out of traditional housing markets in cities like San Francisco and NYC. Co-living targets digital nomads, who are frequently glamourised as location independent knowledge economy workers. Previously we have criticized the hyperbolically glamorous image of the digital nomad as sitting alongside the grim reality of precarious, insecure and non-standard working relations (Bergan, Gorman-Murray, and Power 2021). In contrast to advertising depictions, co-living is a shared housing form that offers perhaps "less of an empowering dream life and more of an economic coping strategy" (Thompson, 2019; cited in Bergan, Gorman-Murray, and Power 2021, 1208). Like gentlemen's clubs and residential hotels, co-living targets individuals who cannot easily access suitable single-family dwellings but could still afford alternative housing forms. In common across co-living, gentlemen's clubs and residential hotels is the importance of services. Accessing these shared housing forms is more expensive than other urban housing forms – therefore residents often expect something they would be unable to access in traditional housing. In co-living, gentlemen's clubs and residential hotels, this has often come in the form of services, furnishings and amenities that rescript domestic practices to be more comfortable, convenient and productive than the normative single-family dwelling.

Co-living's move-in-ready spaces for millennial tech workers coincides with other social norms around remote work and mobility, appealing to emerging digital nomad and remote work trends (Chevtavaeva 2021). Like gentlemen's clubs and residential hotels, co-living emerged during time of changing social norms and domestic cultures. For example, co-living supports new domestic cultures and social norms around productive work, domestic sociality with non-kin and mobility (Bergan, Gorman-Murray, and Power 2021). Co-living is short-term and hyper-flexible (subscribed to by the day, week, or month), socially moderated and facilitated by onsite community managers, and include business amenity services and workspaces (Bergan, Gorman-Murray, and Power 2021). The socio-material arrangement of co-living connect with dominant ideals around productive work, new social norms around domestic sociality, and increasing residential mobility. Productive work practices and precarious labour relations are sustained through co-living as a type of "flexible" housing for young professionals (Bergan, Gorman-Murray, and Power 2021), allowing residents to rent by the day, without a security deposit. Co-living capitalizes on the highly mobile nature of tech work. Rather than residents leasing one dwelling, they typically subscribe through an app to a network of locations around the globe. Subscribers can move easily between locations, all spaces are fully-furnished with no need to move anything more than a suitcase of clothes (Bergan, Gorman-Murray, and Power 2021). One of our interview participants who ran a co-living business stated that moving between Tokyo and New York was as "easy as booking an Uber" or "ordering a pizza" (Bergan & Power, Under Review). Our interpretative policy analysis showed that providers rescript the legal relationship between the residents to being subscribers rather than legal tenants (Bergan and Dufty-Jones 2023). This rescripted relationship makes it more possible for residents to move frequently without much notice and make it easier for providers to generate maximum profits without responsibilities to uphold tenancy laws.

Co-living also holds up economic practices of working from home. Co-living facilitates efficient labour practices by curating a space for tenants to share business amenity services and work from home. Our thematic content analyses revealed how podcast studies, networking events, coworking spaces, makerlabs, start-up incubators or hackathons are common features of all-inclusive co-living residences (Bergan and Dufty-Jones 2023). The sector will often advertise how productive their members are and how convenient their spaces are to work from (Bergan, Gorman-Murray, and Power 2021). In addition to supporting mobility and work, co-living mediates domestic sociality and care. Co-living aims to cure the "millennial loneliness epidemic" induced by transient labour mobilities (Semuels 2015). The sector frequently advertises how their spaces make social connection more possible – advertising things like "friendship" and "cool roommates" as inclusions in the subscription fee (Bergan, Gorman-Murray, and Power 2021). Our interviews with co-living providers revealed how they would try to create affordances for domestic care by hosting community dinners or events designed to connect roommates with others. The thematic analyses of the websites COVID-19 revealed how they quickly pivoted the services they include to advertise access to medical care and mental health supports (Bergan and Dufty-Jones 2023).

### ***Gentlemen's Clubs as Infrastructure***

The industrial revolution in England rendered urban centres fertile ground for housing infrastructures that could better integrate single young people into the capitalist system.



Epochal shifts in social reproduction and economic production saw men working in new types of jobs in new locations; many men began seeking factory work in rapidly urbanizing cities requiring them to move away from the family home (Joseph 2019; Tosh 2007, 2015). The ideological framing and spatial arrangements of households and workspaces shifted to hold up patriarchal and capitalist conditions. Sites of work were ideologically and spatially separated from households, coded as masculine, public and productive. And domestic spaces were coded as feminine, private, caring and a reprieve from paid labour. This created a challenge for single men that did not have a wife to care for and maintain a household, or men whose households were located outside of urban areas. Family life and the home were “perceived as integral to the men’s identities in the nineteenth century to a degree never before realized, as the home was both a man’s possession and where his emotional needs were satisfied” (Milne-Smith 2006, 797). While co-living actively challenges the ideal home as an ideological site for the heteronormative family, gentlemen’s clubs reinforced patriarchal ideals of home. Clubs functioned as a “surrogate home”, ameliorating the domestic care vacuum fuelled by removing men from family homes (Milne-Smith 2009, 796). Men “not only sought out all of the amenities of home but often found the emotional comfort traditionally associated with the family” (Milne-Smith 2006, 798). Clubs were trendy amongst middle-class and upper-class cohorts, appealing to men seeking domestic comforts and social connection (Tosh 2007, 2015). Whereas co-living tends to challenge the importance of familial domestic comfort, gentlemen’s clubs reinforced it by portraying clubs as necessary to fill a void. By the mid-Victorian era, there were over two hundred clubs in London – some with 16 year waiting lists (Milne-Smith 2006). They were so popular that several periodicals were created, aimed at club “devotees” (Milne-Smith 2006, 800). Milne-Smith, (2006, 2009, 2011) and Tosh, (2007, 2015) analyse the periodicals, which typically included articles written by residents, advertisements, or poems reflecting “club life”. Milne-Smith (2009, 798) reviews historical texts (including the periodicals, personal diaries from club members, and advertisements) to determine how clubs were curated to afford a new experience of domesticity that provided the comfort of a family home. Milne-Smith (2009, 798) identifies that:

... clubs catered to many of the emotional and practical needs embodied in the idea of a home. Of practical comforts, the clubs provided a private space within the city that functioned as a dining hall, library, entertainment centre, sleeping quarter, bathhouse, and study ... Clubs also provided a number of emotional and even familial comforts offering affordances for building emotional bonds of friendship as a substitute family.

Like co-living, clubs delivered short-term housing designed to afford convenience, community and productivity. Gentlemen’s clubs greatly appealed to professionals in new industries. They were arenas of business for the publishing industry. A connection between these infrastructures and contemporary knowledge economy labour practices repeats in co-living. Clubs provided access to business amenity services and spaces to encourage productive work – for example, libraries, mail delivery services, and private spaces to work and write. The Devonshire Club advertised that it provided a “Silence Room” for focussed work and writing. Club staff were coached to gatekeep “the troubles of the larger world away from members” (Milne-Smith 2009) so they could focus on work or socializing. Gentlemen’s clubs also supported productivity by smoothing the frictions of “separate spheres” of work and home. Clubs offered a convenient home base in the



centre of London. Meals were provided, evening papers delivered, drinking and socializing was accommodated. They also enabled easy travel; “provincial clubs” attracted men seeking a brief respite from the city. Moreover, perhaps the most critical service was that of community – members were carefully vetted, and the gender segregation firmed up an elite pattern of homosociality.

The ongoing need for care and domesticity was sustained through gentlemen’s clubs when men were “removed” from the home as commerce was centralized in factories and urban worksites. This “flight” of men from the domestic reinforced the coding of the home as feminine. It simultaneously sparked a new masculine archetype – the bachelor, a man whose care needs could be sustained by an infrastructure of domestic care independent of the feminine home (Milne-Smith 2006). This 19<sup>th</sup>-century bachelor identity was embedded and embodied within clubs – similarly to how discourses of the much-mythologized millennial start-up entrepreneur and “hustle cultures” are coded into co-living housing (Bergan, Gorman-Murray, and Power 2021). Gentlemen’s clubs provided the social and spatial affordances for domestic life for single men, employed in productive knowledge-based jobs, and looking for domestic sociality with non-kin. Shared communal spaces, domestic and work services, and the homosocial membership model supported these affordances. The socio-spatial pattern of gentlemen’s clubs reflected and reproduced masculine bachelor identities. For example, the services supported gendered ideals around domestic duties. Despite the absence of a wife or mother to run the home, men did not take on more homecare duties – instead, domestic workers would cook and clean for members. The spaces were also designed for masculine activities such as gambling or drinking. The membership model further reproduced classed masculinity – cultures of vetting and vouching for men from well-off families reproduced patriarchal networks of privilege. Co-living arguably also reproduces privilege – some businesses advertise how many start-ups are founded in their residences, or how they provide access to elite professional networks – opportunities only available to those who can afford to pay the premium fee (Bergan, Gorman-Murray, and Power 2021).

Gentlemen’s clubs made “bachelor” life more possible – ameliorating the care deficits encountered by leaving the domestic family home, providing services and spaces that supported urban work, and furnishing members with opportunities to make friends and connect with other bachelors. Housing had formerly operated as an infrastructure that reified the separation of production and social reproduction as distinct spaces of “work” and “home” (Winders and Smith 2019). “home” was normatively coded as feminine. Gentlemen’s clubs are evidence of how infrastructures can be rejigged to produce different affordances – such as reimagining how masculinity and work was performed in domestic spaces. This role of shared housing infrastructures in mediating shifting gender ideologies and geographies of work was also central to 20<sup>th</sup> Century residential hotels.

### ***Residential Hotels as Infrastructure***

While we are currently witnessing a resurgence of the hotel-ification of housing stock (Simcock 2021), the trend of hotel-living first emerged in the 1870s in New York, rising to prominence during the 1920s. Hotel-living was supported by residential hotels or apartment hotels, becoming a widespread housing practice in cities like NYC. Early residential

hotels appealed to single men and young families who could not afford servants. Residential hotels became “incubators for a mobile high society” (Groth 1994, 37). As time went on, hotel-living became a trend amongst the wealthy residents:

“In town, it is no longer quite in taste to build marble palaces. However, much money one may have,” wrote Arthur Pound, a social commentator of the time. “Instead, one lives in a hotel.” However, few wealthy New Yorkers were interested in a life without servants. The apartment hotel was the perfect answer. (Pedersen 2000, np)

Advertisements commonly stated how hotels would “solve all your housekeeping problems . . . we’re happy to do your hiring and firing!” (Groth 1994, 38). In addition to solving the domestic care voids and the “servant problem”, hotels provided an “embedded sense of community, convenience and facilitated opportunities to access work in cities” (Distasio and Mulligan 2005, 2). Residential hotels evolved to cater to a broader target market of affluent professionals than co-living or gentlemen’s clubs. Residential hotels operated across a spectrum – some provided affordable housing options for women or migrants, while others catered to highly affluent society members. Residential hotels were a “vital rung in the available housing stock” for workers migrating to large urban centres following the Great Depression (Distasio and Mulligan 2005, 2). A much wider spectrum of service inclusions and amenities enabled the broadened target market of residential hotels. Residential hotels like the Barbizon in NYC provided community, safety and job training for women looking to fill the incredible demand for secretarial and administrative work that was beginning to emerge around the 1930s to 1940s (Bren 2021). The Hotel Barbizon, a “women’s residence club” operated from 1927 to 1981 – home to Grace Kelly, Joan Crawford, and Liza Minelli over the years (Pedersen 2000). In common between co-living, gentlemen’s clubs and residential hotels is the idea that accessing the infrastructure enabled certain social practices that supported work and domesticity for single urban professionals – be it enabling living away from the family home, working in new urban industries or facilitating short term residential moves.

Residential hotels curated domestic experiences, providing privacy, comfort and convenience outside of the family home. Like co-living and clubs, residential hotels carefully curated a sense of community through screening practices. However, these screening practices differ between each infrastructure. Residential hotels and gentlemen’s clubs relied on physical separation through lobbies and staffed front desks to screen access to the community and ensure privacy. Desk clerks in residential hotels would screen visitors, and service hallways would offer high-profile guests the opportunity to leave the residence unnoticed. In contrast, co-living relies more on digital screening and booking technologies. These differences in how affordances can be created speak to the relationality of infrastructures.

### **Curating and Coordinating Infrastructure: Socio-Material Patterns of Housing Infrastructures**

In the preceding section, we considered how co-living, gentlemen’s clubs and residential hotels have acted as infrastructures that created affordances for labour – making productive work, mobility and domestic sociality possible in ways that align to changing labour conditions. Co-living makes transnational residential mobility (required for some

contemporary labour relations) more possible through digital booking apps and daily booking options. Gentlemen's clubs provided domestic care services and supportive sociality – making living away from the family home more possible at a time when the nuclear family was still idealized. Residential hotels allowed some single women to move to urban centres and participate in paid work. This list is not exhaustive, but it points to the diversity of ways that housing infrastructures connect with the social world. Shared housing infrastructures *relationally* generate affordances – furnishing possibilities for social practices in relation to wider power relations and intersectional differences. In this section, we consider how these affordances are supported by these infrastructure – focusing on how specific domestic materialities, meanings and services animate their infrastructural work. We then conclude by considering the implications for thinking infrastructurally about shared housing.

### ***Private Domestic Spaces Shrink and are Rearranged***

Co-living, residential hotels and gentlemen's clubs carefully curate their socio-material to create specific affordances – one example is shrinking and rearranging private domestic spaces. Recent work in housing studies has termed this shrinking domesticities, typically framing it as a contemporary trend (Harris et al., 2022; Harris and Nowicki 2020). We demonstrate a longer history, tracing it to clubs and hotels. The scale of bedrooms is typically smaller relative to other household rooms (and those in single-family houses) and separate from communal areas. Bedrooms were arranged away from kitchens, bathrooms, lobbies, and dining rooms in gentlemen's clubs and residential hotels. Removing those amenities from private quarters and moving bedrooms away from the more “public” spheres of the hotel or club, alters how the household functions. Many co-living organizations similarly reduce the private space, or even offer shared bedrooms; websites show bunkbed-style accommodation with a curtain for privacy, offering shared room housing (Bergan, Gorman-Murray, and Power 2021). The shrinking and siloing of bedrooms from other living spaces create a clear and systematic separation of shared spaces from private spaces. The bedrooms in the co-living residences that Tegan visited during interviews were often incredibly utilitarian – with simple furniture and minimal décor. The importance of privacy is devalued in advertisements (Bergan, Gorman-Murray, and Power 2021), superseded by the importance of connecting with non-kin in communal areas. Co-living companies encourage potential residents to focus on “experience” rather than square footage (Bergan, Gorman-Murray, and Power 2021). The shrinking of private spaces creates affordances around how the household is used and understood. This practice supports young people moving out of the family home, and into a domestic space in the city. This reflects the fact it is unaffordable and unfeasible for every young professional to move into urban spaces and live in a separate dwelling designed for a single family. This has been understood since the 1700s in London (Schwarz 1992). Further, living alone was considered inappropriate for women until the latter decades in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Spaces that offer minimal private space support social and economic practices linked to young single professionals being able to move to work in urban spaces. This shrinking and siloing of bedrooms is enabled partly by amplifying the scale and capacity of other domestic living spaces.

### ***Living Spaces Become Shared and Productive***

Living spaces are understood as shared and productive spaces – rather than sites for intimate familial connection, coded as separate from commercial activities and private from non-kin as idealized in traditional single-family housing types. The living spaces in our shared housing infrastructures tend to be scaled up, while the private spaces are scaled down. The use of large open spaces and with business amenities services and equipment included as domestic furnishings. Clubs, hotels and co-living all facilitate the idea that work, and productivity can be core to the domestic. Shared spaces are arranged to make working in the home efficient and productive. In co-living, we see the domestic living room replaced by multi-purpose shared spaces that support everything from co-working, podcasting, and yoga to social events. In co-living, living rooms are typically advertised as dual sites for hanging out with friends, networking and working (Bergan, Gorman-Murray, and Power 2021). In gentlemen’s clubs, there would be dedicated spaces for work, central parlours, “quiet rooms” and dining rooms were critical spaces for business (Joseph 2019). Likewise, hotels would offer lobbies and restaurants, advertising their utility for business meetings (Groth, 1994). Maximizing shared spaces connects to practices supporting productivity and business networks for single young professionals.

This maximization of shared living spaces was also seen in clubs and hotels. For example, kitchens, dining halls, laundries and lobbies were greatly expanded in clubs and residential hotels. They were often arranged on lower floors, away from the private bedroom spaces. Sandoval-Strausz (2007) points to how hotel builders reorganized the household space to accommodate worlds of “strangers” by rearranging essential domestic spaces. For example, private quarters like bedrooms shrank, and other areas like kitchens and bathrooms expanded, became centralized and moved away from guests’ rooms. The most comfortable furnishings and commonly used utilities are also typically located in the shared spaces. This served two purposes – making the dwelling more affordable by sharing the most expensive furnishings and well-equipped spaces between guests and encouraging congregation and domestic sociality between-non kin.

### ***Services are Integrated and Experiences Maximised***

In co-living, clubs and hotels the challenges of having minimal private space, and maximization of shared spaces, are ameliorated by services that support hospitality and productivity. Co-living focuses much of its advertising on being an “all-inclusive” housing *experience*, achieved through services layered onto housing/workspaces. For example, cleaning, house dinners, social networking nights, yoga nights, weekend activities, professional development classes are common co-living services. A house manager often delivers these services in co-living – a cross between a dorm advisor, concierge and building manager (Bergan and Dufty-Jones 2023). Similar roles were in gentlemen’s clubs and residential hotels, with butlers, concierges and other household staff ensuring that guests were supported through curated services. Residential hotels like the Barbizon would provide meals that would be served around the times of the end of the secretarial course training days in which many of the female tenants would be enrolled. In gentlemen’s clubs, the concierge would deliver or receive mail for members. Services are layered onto domestic spaces in ways that furnish possibilities

to order and organize the unique socio-spatial needs of young professionals living and working in the city. Services are used to reframe how space is used, experienced or understood. The services are critical for animating the potential for these housing types to support care and work. For example, by introducing domestic services like housekeeping, the domestic infrastructures ameliorate care deficits that emerge when living apart from the family home. By introducing business services like professional networking or training events, our providers expressed that the spaces gave members opportunities for increased productivity. Shared housing can be arranged in specific ways to generate affordances for members to be competitive in knowledge economy industries.

## Conclusion

The paper reflects on how housing infrastructures organize social life. It identifies shared housing as a critical form of urban infrastructure in Anglophone cities since the early 1900s. We use co-living housing, residential hotels and gentlemen's clubs to illustrate how housing infrastructures enable young professionals to live and work in urban spaces. Specifically, their socio-material patterns afford: domestic sociality with non-kin, productive work, and moving homes frequently. We demonstrate how housing infrastructures can be curated to rescript household practices and spatialities in order to create affordances for dominant social and economic systems.

Our infrastructural reading of housing demonstrates the importance of taking a "long view" (Flanagan and Jacobs 2019, 9). Contemporary housing practices and forms can be understood more clearly by connecting with the past. Key to understanding the ways that infrastructures order and organize the social world is to pay attention to their operation *across time*. We argue that co-living is one of a myriad of shared housing infrastructures that have evolved to support work and life in urban space. To avoid becoming obsolete or irrelevant, infrastructures must be what Berlant (2016) refers to as "debugged" and reinitialized during transitional times. This is likely why we see this constant evolution of shared housing infrastructures in response to crises spurred by changing conditions of labour and life.

Co-living, gentlemen's clubs and residential hotels are not equivalent to traditional housing infrastructures such as detached single family dwellings – they generate different affordances and have different socio-material patterns. The shared housing infrastructures we review facilitate work and life in cities for young people who are not living in a traditional nuclear family or are not necessarily looking (or able) to stay in one place, long-term. Previous papers have argued that infrastructures are defined relationally – a key consideration is how they are used and inhabited (Bergan & Power, Under Review). Co-living is not used to provide low-cost or secure housing. Co-living is inhabited by millennial professionals in ways that hold up urban life and labour. It *makes possible* the often-uncomfortable mobilities induced by gig economies and hegemonically precarious labour relations, and emphasizes productivity by reducing frictions between private and commercial spaces. It simultaneously *resists* other outcomes of financialised capitalism by responding to care deficits through domestic services and supporting domestic sociality. By rethinking shared housing as infrastructure, we create space to analyse what values are coded into them by providers and

policy makers and how these spaces are redefined and reproduced through use. Our positioning of co-living as an infrastructure highlights its critical role in sustaining the challenges of working in the city under capitalism.

Importantly, taking a long view provides a platform to witness the temporality of infrastructural politics. Infrastructures order, resist and sometimes reinforce power relations. These infrastructural politics are revealed in the differences they create. For example, the shared housing infrastructures we have considered have made labour more possible for *some* people in productive knowledge economy industries in urban spaces. Co-living and gentlemen's clubs in particular are exclusive and expensive housing infrastructures – accessing their benefits comes at a high price. These infrastructures reinforce wider political-economic systems and power relations by enabling precarious work practices. In addition to holding up macro-power relations in society, infrastructures are profoundly intimate and intersectional. The same housing infrastructure can operate very different in relation to its individual inhabitant. For example, residential hotels were for some an exclusive place to do business in urban spaces that negated the challenge of needing to bring domestic staff from the family home on short business trips. For wealthy men, residential hotels afforded convenience. For others, residential hotels represented a rare opportunity to enter the workforce in ways deemed socially acceptable. For single women, residential hotels like The Barbizon represented an opportunity to enter *paid* labour. Taking a long view towards infrastructures involves understanding that housing infrastructures themselves change, as do the social practices they support, and the impacts they leave on their inhabitants. By tracing housing across time, and being sensitive to its changing infrastructural work, we can engage with the similarities and differences in the role of housing in society.

In establishing shared housing as infrastructure, we have provided insight into how infrastructures come in various shapes and forms. Our analysis demonstrates they are carefully curated socio-material patterns that are generative and relational. We have discussed some common strategies used to animate shared housing types into urban infrastructures, but this list is by no means exhaustive. The dynamic nature of infrastructures makes them tricky to trace, yet critically important. It is easy to view co-living or the hotel-ification of housing stock through a lens of disruption or innovation, however, there is further nuance. Housing infrastructures do not burst into the urban, new and self-contained. They assemble, breakdown, and evolve. Social and economic processes do not leave an even impress – infrastructures can reproduce and mediate the values coded into them; they can also do things beyond the intention of human design (Power and Mee 2020). This means that housing infrastructures cannot be left unchecked by housing or urban policy and governance. Viewing housing as infrastructure allows us to see the polymorphous character of power relations extant in contemporary society and explain the mechanisms that consolidate these relationships. We focused on shared housing here, hoping to see this framing extended and utilized to shine an infrastructural light on the broad spectrum of housing forms and practices. Housing infrastructures are important for holding up productive work, mobility, social connection and care. Our research encourages consideration of better means of realizing the infrastructural work of shared housing. At the moment, the benefits of shared housing are often left to the designs and functions of the private market. Policymakers should take a more active role in ensuring the delivery, function and access to appropriate housing infrastructures.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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