Theoretically, the workshop was guided by Amartya Sen’s capability approach, which focuses on people’s abilities and opportunities to achieve their aspirations. Through both weeks of the workshop, the Capability Approach was applied which guided participants to focus on housing aspirations and residents’ freedom to achieve them. The first week participants used photography as a tool to implement Sen’s framework. Semi-structured interviews, focus groups and feedback enabled... and density, group 3 explored the institutional arrangement and procedures necessary for getting security of tenure, benefits from local government and connection to services.

Salvador da Bahia, with more than 3 million inhabitants, was chosen as our case study because of the housing crisis it is facing and the many housing interventions in a variety of formats. Within this context we explored two very different types of initiatives addressing the housing crisis. In the first week we worked in the neighbourhood of Novos Alagados, where there has been a poverty alleviation programme called Ribeira Azul managed by the state government of Bahia and the Italian NGO AVSI. In the second week we worked with the roofless movement of Bahia, Movimento dos Sem Teto da Bahia (MSTB), to explore a more grassroots approach of addressing the housing shortage of Salvador.

The workshop exposed participants to the re-housing processes of the urban poor in Salvador da Bahia. The investigation of the two strategies mentioned above generated several reflections on the process of building communities through the process of building houses: Firstly both initiatives have recognised the interest in building on a community spirit, however, for different purposes. The state-led initiative perceived community participation as a process to enhance the acceptance of the pre-elaborated project. While the grassroots initiative perceived community participation as a mechanism to achieve not only housing outcomes, but the various needs to have a dignified living standard. The result was the identification of a fragmented sense of community in Novos Alagados, leading to frustration and mistrust of governmental initiatives. While in Escada, the influence of the MSTB was a significant player in unifying the community and encouraging a collective spirit, but also realising the threat of encroaching individual’s agency.