

Latin American networking and cooperative struggles in Argentina: A conversation with the Movimiento de Ocupantes e Inquilinos (MOI)

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**Conversation series | Pursuing Tenant International:
Learning from struggles for home in Abya-Yala | Part III**
Edited by Ana Vilenica

Latin American networking and cooperative struggles in Argentina:

A conversation with the Movimiento de Ocupantes e Inquilinos (MOI)

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Abstract

This conversation examines the Movimiento de Ocupantes e Inquilinos (MOI) in Argentina, a grassroots organization promoting cooperative, self-managed housing for over 30 years. Based on a conversation with Néstor Jeifetz, the article traces the origins of the MOI from the 1980s building occupations in Buenos Aires, through its connection to the broader Latin American cooperative housing movement, including the creation of the Latin American Secretariat for Popular Housing and Habitat (SELVIHP). The article explores how MOI's efforts to reclaim vacant urban properties—such as the La Fábrica cooperative housing project—address the critical need for secure, affordable housing in a context of neoliberal economic policies and external debt crises. Jeifetz discusses the political ramifications of recent far-right victories in Argentina, which threaten hard-won social rights and self-managed housing initiatives, as well as the MOI's role in resisting these policies through a framework of collective ownership, democratic decision-making, and mutual aid. By highlighting the intersections of housing with education, health, and labor, and situating the MOI's work within a larger history of land and building occupations across Abya-Yala, this article provides a nuanced understanding of the ongoing struggles for housing justice in the face of both local and global neoliberal forces.

Keywords

Cooperative housing, mutual aid, networks, Argentina, Latin America

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Introduction

We were introduced to Néstor Jeifetz by María Eugenia Reyes. We met at a cooperative housing project named La Fábrica (The Factory), located at the refurbished industrial site Las Barracas in Buenos Aires. Upon recommendation from a colleague in Uruguay, they welcomed us with sandwiches, fruit, water, coffee, and biscuits at a large bench and table in the entrance lobby. From there, we had a view of the gardens, the beautiful wooden windows and fences nestled amidst the refurbished industrial structure, and of neighbors coming in and out of the building. Joaquín and Melissa, residents themselves, joined us during the conversation, with a constant stream of people stopping by to greet Néstor. The neighbors seemed at ease, engaging in conversations about Mexico and Serbia. The trust within the community was evident when a neighbor entrusted his keys to Joaquín, allowing us to visit his apartment in his absence. Despite the heat and the lingering tension following the presidential elections, the encounter took place in a friendly and welcoming atmosphere.

The Movimiento de Ocupantes e Inquilinos (MOI), of which both Néstor Jeifetz by María Eugenia Reyes are part, is a grassroots organization that has been working for over 30 years to promote self-management and cooperative housing in Argentina. MOI focuses on ensuring that people have control over their living conditions by advocating for collective ownership, mutual aid, and democratic spaces. The movement grew out of the building occupations in Buenos Aires in the 1980s, where residents sought to reclaim their right to home. Since then, MOI has been working to create self-managed housing projects, helping families organize cooperatives and take part in building and managing their own homes. Their work goes beyond housing, connecting issues like education, work, and health to the broader fight for social and economic justice. MOI has expanded its efforts internationally, collaborating with organizations across Latin America, and building networks such as the Latin American Secretariat for Popular Housing and Habitat (SELVIHP) to strengthen

Figure 1

La Fabrica.

Image: Ana Vilenica



cooperative housing movements and supports movements in their fight for the right to habitat.

Ana: How would you describe what is going on in Argentina at the moment?

Néstor: It is a barbaric country. There was external indebtedness and inflation before Milei won. His victory is linked to the payment of illegitimate foreign debt. In the end, it will result in the worsening of living conditions of workers, an increase in living costs, and a reduction of wages. He is part of the fascist right. This is an international emergency. It is worse than you might think. It is in everything. The worst thing is that you don't even get to know about some of it. They are taking away our rights, human rights. The deputy minister is the daughter of a military man who participated in the military dictatorship. They deny that there were 30,000 disappeared here. They deny absolutely everything. This character won with the vote of the popular sectors. He won with 11 points. That's a big difference. The bulk of the vote came from the popular sectors that had been hit by the politics of progressivism. This is literally destroying the state. He wants to privatize all the state-owned oil companies such as the YPS. Massa wasn't the best, but no, he would never dare to do what this guy is doing. Many of us on the left didn't vote for Massa. The left also has to be self-critical. Sectarian left sectors lost the necessary capacity for articulation. In addition to all that, we, the social organizations, have always had to go out to fight, to struggle. Now, really, the policies that we carried out, these policies of self-management

Figure 2

Néstor Jeifetz.

Image: Ana Vilenica



and so, go against what he wants to implement. They are not for self-management. This is an implicit, explicit, and intentional anti-capitalist conception. I have a 15-year-old grandson, really young, and he asked me about the crisis. I told him that during the crisis we paid with money that wasn't money, the patacones. He said: "I ask you because they say that the patacones are going to come back". We had to barter at that time; it was a real barter where we exchanged, I don't know, we exchanged food for something else, for services too! A lawyer offered his service for food, for example. That's how we survived and had a good time too.

Ana: MOI also has roots in these struggles and is affected by what is going on now. Could you tell us a bit more about its history and the history of the cooperative movement in Argentina?

Néstor: I hope you don't get bored with this rhetoric. Well, it's a story of our own. The story of the mobilization is not only a story about the MOI. It's a history that started in the late '80s and in the 1990s. In other words, it began in the decade after the genocidal dictatorship in our country. In other words, it was the political economy of dictatorship. It was a process, on the one hand of great privatizations and a process of great deindustrialization through repression and the murder of our comrades. In terms of economic policies, there was a huge deindustrialization process that generated the most important particularity of the city, a great number of empty factory buildings. It used to be called the 'graveyards of factories'. This was originally an empty factory. When democracy was restored in 1984-1985, there were thousands of vacant properties. The recovery of democracy did not open them up for the popular sectors. It opened up a parallel process, a synchronous alternative, which was the land seizures on the outskirts of the big cities. As you know, it is not a phenomenon particular to Argentina; it is a continental phenomenon, from Us huaia to Tierra del Fuego. Yes, the whole continent was crossed by the phenomenon of land occupations. This correlated with the inexistence of popular housing policies. And what a historical researcher here in Argentina, the architect Jorge Enrique Hardoy, wondered was who is legitimate and who is illegitimate in relation to this phenomenon of land occupations, when more than 220 million people have to occupy land to have a floor and a roof over their heads. And today I was saying that the illegitimate one was the capital that did not generate [opportunities]. Let's say that it generated the loss of basic rights, the loss of the right to the city and did not give them any other alternative.

Millions of comrades across the continent took the land. The uniqueness of the squatting phenomenon in the city of Buenos Aires was precisely the takeovers of buildings. The exceptionality is the scale of the phenomenon. Let's say that there were more than 220,000 families that took over buildings. The physical existence of thousands of empty buildings due to deindustrialization policies by the genocidal dictatorship opened up this alternative parallel to the alternative of taking land in peripheral areas. The meaning of taking land within the city is to have infrastructure, to have services, to have a hospital, to have a job, to have basic living conditions. This was the frame, the initial context.

This happened prior to our organization and the other history. The other thing, which also generated the organization, was a group of comrades around a design workshop in La Plata. In fact, the Architecture of the Community in Cuba was connected to it. Rodolfo Livingston's teachings and experiences were very influential. The workshop, Taller Total, in Córdoba was one of those experiences. The dictatorship obviously hit the university and the student movement enormously, 30,000 people disappeared, 80% were students— young people from the university. If you go to any university, any department, you will see thousands of students killed by the dictatorship between 20 and 30 years ago. When democracy returned, we set up a design course at the UBA, here in the Department of Architecture of the University of Buenos Aires. The workshops here have the name of *Catedra*. What was the focus of those design workshops? The focus was on occupations. This has to do with stories of the people.

In our country, the experience of Cordobazo, led by Agustín “El Gringo” Tosco from the Energy Union, in the late ‘60s was important. It was a decade [that was] impacted by the Cuban Revolution. This was prior to what happened in the ‘70s, the beginning of the dictatorship. Gringo Tosco was the symbolic figure of what was a movement of workers and students united in a front. It was also a counter-cultural movement against the culture of the system and for the culture of the people themselves. There are the technocrats and here are the people. If you are poor, you are popular, and if you're a technocrat, you are middle class or upper class and a son of a bitch. Yes, that shitty culture exists. It wasn't always there. It's antagonistic to what was the Gringo's slogan of the workers and

Figure 3
MOI publications.
Image: Ana Vilenica



students united. You are now coming from Uruguay, and you saw it, the FUCVAM was born from the confluence of the University of the Republic with the workers' movement—one of the most paradigmatic experiences of self-managed cooperativism on the continent. It was born out of this confluence, which of course had to do with a political framework. The people's congresses, the construction of the Frente Amplio, and those experiences. Our movement was born from the Uruguayan experience of the confluence of the University with the workers' movement. We learned about this from the comrade who was involved in an occupation. She was a squatter who was resisting, she was from the other side of the river, from that little country.

Ana: From university you came to occupations?

Néstor: In the 1980s from the university, we came across the occupation. And what came first were pedagogical exercises. That interrelation was one of the concrete origins of the MOI, wasn't it? The confluence of the workers' movement with the university, with the university workers, was not in those years, and it was the fault of one of the priests linked to liberation theology, which was a phenomenon, let's say, a phenomenon of liberation in Brazil, the landless people movement. There was a sector of the Church that was an accomplice of the dictatorship here in our country, at the upper sectors of the Church, and at the bottom, there were the priests who were in the slums. They incorporated the conception of liberation theology. One of them was Father Pizzi who left almost ten years ago. Father Pizzi was one of the village priests here. He interacted and had an impact on the Brazilian experience, specifically in the 1990s. In 1990 the FUCVAM in Uruguay was celebrating his 20th anniversary. It was born in 1970, from the Ley Nacional de Vivienda of 1968. They invited the father. And the father told us, boys let's cross the river for you to know a significant organizational, propositional, and transformational experience. We went to Montevideo to a meeting in 1990, I think it was September 1990, if I'm not mistaken. At that time, we were just starting out, we were three, four years old, let's say, as an organization. There were comrades from the land occupations by the outskirts of Asunción del Paraguay. There were also the União dos Movimentos de Moradia de São Paulo; they were starting in the second year of the first government of Partido dos Trabalhadores in São Paulo, they won in 1988. The União dos Movimentos de Moradia was also an articulation both with the political process, with the workers' movement, and with Liberation Theology, which was also at the origin of 'The Landless Workers' Movement, Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST). At that meeting in 1990, it was decided to create a Latin American space. It was decided to create the headquarters of the Latin American Housing Secretariat, and then we added "housing and popular habitat" (SELVIHP). The conception of housing is a conception of habitat. The first one is more reduced, more limited. The notion of habitat is the concept of integrality, and it entails the logic of non-business production. What capital is interested in is to produce quickly to make money. The notion of habitat is antagonistic to the logic of capital. It was created as a space of first political repudiation of neoliberalism. Imagine, in the 1990s, we had all the shit of neoliberalism in each of our countries. We had a character like Menem. The one who made us shit; he was the political referent for the

implementation of neoliberal policies. Now, we have him here, again, in this new stage, right? He was like the father of the boy in power now.

The first axis was having a political definition. The second was creating a space, not an NGO, but a popular-based organization. The third axis was the construction of a self-management horizon *Patria Grande* and the fourth the self-management. Those were the four elements: a political position of the repudiation of neoliberalism, the popular-based organization schema, the impulse of the anti-systemic conception of self-management and the material construction of a dimension of the *Patria Grande* of Latin America. What the successive colonizers did, the Spanish, the Portuguese, the English, and the Yankees was to split the territory into 80,000 pieces. That is why the vindication of our *Patria Grande* is another axis of our organization. Well, the first meeting took place in 1990 in Uruguay, in Montevideo, where it was decided to form the Latin American space, the SELVIHP, and then one year after we met in Sao Paulo. The organization was formed in the context of the phenomenon of building occupations. Our initial collectives were formed within the framework of the phenomenon of building occupations. Then there were other meetings, in 1993 and then 1996, [and then] in 1996 the creation of the Constitution of Autonomous City of Buenos Aires happened. We met in an occupation badly located in Puerto Madero, between San Telmo and Puerto Madero. At that time there was no Puerto Madero.¹ There were the docks of the port, and everything around us were sheds where the tools were kept, everything that had to do with the port. In the middle was that factory that was abandoned, and we occupied it. Next to that, next to San Telmo, was the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Buenos Aires and the Ministry of Agriculture. It was one block away from the Ministry and from the workers' Confederación General del Trabajo, CGT next to it.

Figure 4

Photo of the old factory in one of the appartmants.

Image: Ana Vilenica



¹ Puerto Madere is a gentrified section of Buenos Aires directed at tourists and wealthy Argentines.

Moisés: Was it public or private property?

Néstor: It was vacant real estate. Vacancy is a strategic issue here and all over the world. There are hundreds of empty buildings. These exist in the context of real estate speculation. We thought that the best way to stop evictions is to go for the regularization of the ownership of the building that is being occupied. To regularize the occupation, to win the building, right? And we say this because sometimes one can tend to be a “fireman,” right? But there are many experiences that remain in the mere attempts to stop the eviction and don't even think about going for the building. We have three experiences: national, ownership of the city, and private ownership. We had good experiences and experiences that didn't go as well. We had both experiences. These are two cultures; they are two cultures, and they are concrete practices with which we have always interacted in conflicts. There it was a technical process. The little drawings of the architects were to tell the comrades, ‘Look at this, this shed can be transformed into this shape. This little shed can be transformed into a decent living space’. Something that people didn't have in mind or had thought about when they occupied, they just do it. We don't negate the necessity of formalities. The collective has to register to gain legitimacy from the State, but it is not the basis. Cooperative construction is the construction of a collective. The formalities don't guarantee the consciousness, the capacity, and the genuineness of the collective. Who takes the decisions? We are going to get involved as a family in this fight, first aiming to win the land and then, well, everything that comes after the process, right? As I said, in the 1990s we had good experiences and we also had experiences that didn't turn out well. In general, when you succeed, you are working with people who want to use it. That is the “culture of use.”

Transforming the culture is the most essential transformation of any process. The strategic objective is to change consciousness—[to create]cultural change. That is the objective. Where obviously the fight for the materialization of rights such as the right to the city is an important part of that transition. Now when you manage to start a project, you enter into the process of self-managed execution, etcetera, and then people go inside the little house, lock the key and say goodbye, good night, then you haven't won a damn thing. No, because the essential change is systemic change. The essential change is to be part of collectives that transform the society in which we live.

The leadership in our MOI didn't come from the university, but from the families occupying. The coordination was made by the representatives of the occupations. Some of us even left the university formally. Education for us is an essential issue from kindergarten to high schools. Education is an essential issue in the fight that runs parallel to the fight for shelter. Study, you will lead, Bertolt Brecht said. Learning and education are fundamental issues. Our organization has been trying, we have been trying, for more than 30 years, to build a comprehensive approach.

In 1996, a whole process was generated in CABA (Autonomous City of Buenos Aires) when it went from being dependent on the National Executive to being an autonomous

city.² There was a whole process of sectoral commissions: labor, health, habitat, etcetera, that were not open to the participation of grassroots organizations. In 1996, the Constitution of CABA had to be elaborated. This was a participatory process, with the influence of what was the participatory budgeting from Brazil.³

There are six or seven axes that deal with strategic issues. For example, raising the issue of reappropriation of vacant properties, promotion of self-management plans, regularization of ownership and land registry with a criterion of settlement—not with a criterion of kicking a family in the ass and taking them out to the periphery. We created these axes together with other organizations. It was a process that of course also came from interaction with comrades from Uruguay, from the interaction with comrades from the União dos Movimentos de Moradia of São Paulo. The Constitution is proposing this in its chapter on habitat, which we are going to present to the Legislature of the City of Buenos Aires. The elaboration and certain implementation of a habitat self-management law. That's basically what we did in 1999, it was a very intense process. The compañeras used to say that we lived at the Legislature, not in our houses. It was more or less like that, from this process the first self-management law of the Argentine Republic was born, the Law 341. It was born within the framework of this Inter-sectoral Legislative Board, where we discussed the specificity of the concept of self-management in the Constitution. That was the hinge that started another stage.

Now we got the law, but how do we implement it? To be hyper-synthetic, it isn't that the interaction with the state is always a fight, sometimes it's a fight, sometimes it's dialogue, sometimes it's good, isn't it? And another thing is that you get inside the house. A struggle is to interact with the state, to build another state, a self-managed state. How do you transform the culture of assistance, this culture of delegation, this culture of the system that is functional to the system, to promote the self-management line, which is an anti-capitalist line. Even in serious situations like these. You have to build your own strength, but not only strength, it is not just a matter of adding people, it is about the quality. You don't want people who are here to be paid by a welfare program, which is typical for the progressives that haven't built a damn thing, not in terms of a new culture.

How not to transfer state resources through the City Housing Institute - IVC implementing body but directly to the organizations? To solve three things. To solve the purchase of land. To solve the execution of construction, and to solve the interdisciplinary professional support. That's the equation of three variables of the Law 341. One of the basic issues that comes up for the organizations is, for example, who is going to build? The cooperative is going to receive the money. In the framework of the Law 341, 118 properties were bought for a land bank, and 400-500 cooperatives were formed. They could be cooperatives, mutual aid organizations or possibly civil associations. Most of

² The 1994 constitutional reform granted Buenos Aires city its autonomy, leading to its official designation as the Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires (Autonomous City of Buenos Aires).

³ Participatory budgeting, which began decades ago in Porto Alegre, South Brazil, allows citizens to influence municipal budget allocations by presenting their demands and priorities, with final decisions made after public delegate recommendations and city council approval since 1989.

Figure 5
La Fábrica.
Image: Ana Vilenica



them were cooperatives. Cooperative and mutual aid were coordinated by an institutional body called the National Institute of Associative and Social Economy INAES. It is the one that gives you or doesn't give you the registration. More than 400 cooperatives were formed in the framework of the implementation of the Law 341. Many professional teams were formed. The implementation started in the context of the 2001 crisis in Argentina. In 2001 we were in a situation like the one we are in now. It was an explosion. Not against Menemism, but against the destructiveness of neoliberal policies. There was a very strong outburst that made the president crack. The president's famous departure from the Casa Rosada.

Part of the explosion was the takeover of the recuperated factory by the workers. And that was a very strong, very important, self-managed experience. One of the essential aspects that characterize self-management is non-profit production—the production of habitat as goods of use, not as exchange goods or commodities. Recovered factories had no bosses. This was the appropriation of the means of production. The Shannon was one of the biggest factories in Latin America. It was a ceramics factory. When the workers took it over, they changed the name to Sympathy. We tried to interact within the impulse of self-management.

I would say that 90% of the cooperatives hired companies. Not a big one, but a smaller, medium-sized one, which is me. The only ones that decided that they were going to build themselves was the MTL. We called the model a social unit of self-managed production. It incorporates the mutual aid that is ancestral. It is not an invention; it is a historical recovery. The labor force is basically covered by mutual aid. It is not a field of qualification because most people initially do not know what a mixture, concrete, or a mortar is. Building is a field of work and fundamentally it is a field of appropriation of the process. The process is not the classic one, it's not as if you sign up to see if they call and then they call to give you the key. The absolute inappropriateness of the business logic is

antagonistic to daily appropriation by the self-managed production with mutual aid and collective ownership. These are central issues. We also talk about the right to beauty. We talk about architecture. The right to beauty in the materialization of habitat is also another substantive issue, isn't it? Against the routine logic of the business production of small and ugly houses—the wrongly called social housing—because Puerto Madero is social housing, but for another social class.

All our work was to develop networks, interactions. Now we also understand that it is fundamental, and it is an obligation of the organizations to socialize their knowledge and their practices, not to be stronger as an organization, but to be stronger in contributing to the struggle of the popular movement. The conception of habitat is a conception of integrality, of neighborhood integration that has to be materialized in the construction of these exchanges. This space belongs to the cooperative, but it can also belong to the neighbor across the street or the one around the corner, or the school three blocks away. That interaction is what strengthens, so to say, and leads to the construction of the community, to be part of and inserted into the construction of the community.

In 2008, we focused on the integration of cooperatives into an organization. And from 2008 onwards, we started, a bit like the third stage of our work, that has to do with the process of nationalization and the deepening of the Law 341. For example, 341, as I was saying, does not define what the production model is. The national bill is where we started. In 2008, the federation was set up, and we began to work in Rosario, Santa Fe in the

Figure 6

La Fábrica.

Image: Ana Vilenica



south, the Patagonian pioneer in Bariloche, in San Martín de Los Andes, Neuquén, Río Negro, and even in the south of Argentina, which is Tierra del Fuego. Well, a whole process of organizing started with the basic idea that self-management has to be nationalized, it can't remain in the city of Buenos Aires. There is the concept of self-management as a concept of transformation, of power building.

In 2008-2010 Macri and his party start to win here in the city of Buenos Aires. The right begins to win I think it was around 2007-2008. The right-wing wins. Well, when the right-wing wins, the right-wing knows or understands what self-management is and knows that it is an enemy. Consequently, and practically since then, since Macri took office in Buenos Aires, half a square meter more of land could not be bought. It was not possible to buy, only if it was a strategic issue for development. And it is also a right-wing that particularly has a lot of real estate business. Big real estate deals were made.

The state agency used to be called ONABE, Organismo Nacional de Administración de Bienes del Estado, now Agency AAVE is the one that manages state property. We had several interactions with it but we were not alone. By 2016, we formed what we call the Habitat Collective with other organizations interested in working with Law 341. There are other federations, there is even the Movimiento Territorial Liberación—MTL and another federation called Todos Juntos. A collective space was created. This space was created from a massive encampment that took place in Plaza de Mayo, in the central square where the Casa Rosada is. An encampment that was set up to repudiate the imprisonment of Milagro Salas, a popular fighter from Jujuy. He is still in prison.

We had several very nice meetings with the government. "We have land," they said, but they never transferred it. We decided on one hand, to form the collective and, on the other hand, concretely, to promote the National Law of Self-managed Social Production of Habitat. That's why we were discussing nationalizing and further developing Law 341, as I mentioned. Our national bill has had three entries so far: the first in 2016, the second in 2019, and the third at the beginning of last year, in 2022, which we presented at the Kirchner Cultural Centre by the President of the Republic, Alberto Fernández.

We received explicit support for the national law from a colleague of ours, who is a Peronista and was the former Minister of Public Works, Gabriel Katopodis. Is he now working? Representing? in the province of Buenos Aires. Initially, as mentioned, it originated in Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina, with the axes I previously discussed.

The SELVIHP was not just a word; it represented a comprehensive exchange. However, we also faced some conflicts with Uruguay. While we highly value the FUCVAM experience as a crucial example of self-managed cooperativism and collective ownership, they decided to leave SELVIHP. Despite that, SELVIHP has been a space for exchange, and we organized an internship. FUCVAM teammates visited and stayed for about a month to a month and a half, assisting with mutual help during the cooperative's initial stages. The union has not always been in place. We operated in three areas: the service

Figure 7
MOI flag.
Image: Ana
Vilenica



structure, activities, and meetings. International meetings were held for general knowledge exchange. Another tool we employed was the assembly of internships.

Moisés: For example?

Néstor: An internship involves visiting a particular country to understand the existing regulations. It's about exploring the self-managed norms at the local, state, or national level, such as those in Brazil, Uruguay, Panama, or any other country. There are three types of internships. In 2010-2011, we established the Latin American School of Self-Management (Escuela Latinoamericana de Autogestión). The school started operating with programs like the Peru Internship in 2010 or possibly in Ecuador in 2012. The programs evolve and are tailored to each country's unique situation.

Let's go and explore this area. Let's take a short walk.

This place represents self-managed collective ownership, not self-building. It's crucial to distinguish between self-management and self-construction as they are almost contradictory concepts. Self-management requires a relationship with the state, involving a struggle for the state to allocate resources not for real estate production but for creating habitats for people. Self-management entails not only transforming the state but also reshaping it entirely. The quest for socialism, rather than merely anti-capitalism, should manifest in daily practices, not just rhetoric. While various left-wing factions exist, some lack tangible transformational initiatives. Self-management embodies the daily struggle for change.

It's not an easy journey, but it's incredibly fulfilling, isn't it? Witnessing the unity among group members as they progress is remarkable. As mentioned earlier, we also focus on education, emphasizing a distinct approach to mental health. Several years ago, our headquarters were located right across this place. All the neuropsychiatric facilities—women's, men's, youth, and elderly centers—are clustered nearby, forming a significant

area. A few blocks eastward lies a cluster of asylums. In the health sector, we strive to break free from traditional mental health practices associated with asylums and cultivate a new understanding of mental wellness. Our collaboration with organizations like the Frente de Artistas del Borda, which challenge the conventional institutional approach to mental health, showcases our commitment to transformative practices.

This space embodies love—it's not individual property but a collective asset. The dining area, kitchen, and all other facilities are communal. We've worked on preserving the original structure, incorporating industrial elements where necessary. Essentially, the entire perimeter of the complex has been refurbished, with the central block being a new addition. Feel free to explore the upper floors if you'd like.

About this Conversation participants

Nestor Jeifetz was the president of Federación Cooperativas Autogestionarias MOI Argentina and coordinator of SELVIHP.

Ana Vilenica is a feminist, no-border, and urban activist and organizer from Serbia, currently residing in Italy. She is a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow with the ERC project 'Inhabiting Radical Housing' at the Polytechnic of Turin's Inter-university Department of Regional & Urban Studies and Planning (DIST) and a core member of Beyond Inhabitation Lab. Ana is a member of the Radical Housing Journal Editorial collective and the Feminist Autonomous Centre for research (FAC research).

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