

**SIGN ACTIVISM**

**SOCIAL**

**DESIGN ACTIVISM  
AND  
SOCIAL CHANGE  
DESIGN HISTORY  
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ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

**CHANGE**

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Title of the  
paper

**A-legality as a strategy for activism.  
The story of the self-built house  
in Barcelona**

Santiago Cirugeda (Seville, 1971) hacks legal restraints on urban planning to create "a-legal" interventions within the public domain. This "a-legality" is the looking glass through which we will reconsider social housing projects in Barcelona from the times of the Republic until today. There are three main objectives in this. The first, being to determine the contexts, principles and results of a-legal forms of activism. The second, being to revise the history of social housing in Barcelona from the perspective of a-legal activism. To reconsider historical precedents for innovative social housing design such as; the "Caseta Desmuntable" (Barcelona 1931) by Josep Lluís Sert, a paradigm of the modern movement, the "Instant City" (Eivissa 1971) created for the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design, described by the organisers as an "ephemeral micro-cosmos" or the "Chicken" house (Barcelona 2005) by Santiago Cirugeda a contemporary solution to the social housing problem. Finally the aim is to speculate about the projection that these a-legal strategies can have over time in the public domain, taking as an example Cirugeda's "Urban Prescriptions"(1997). Cirugeda's instructions for self-builds in the public space were available to anybody simply by downloading them from the Internet. Several designers, such as Area Estudio in Guadalajara (México 2009) or Oliver Bishop in London (UK 2008) have downloaded and used these "Urban Prescriptions". It is an example that enables a reconsideration of historical precedents and an exploration of the role that a-legal activism can have in subverting urban planning for social change.