

Living well, building frugally

Housing, quality of use, and sustainable development: an integrated approach

European Action Week for a just building transition

Date

**Friday 11
September 2026**

Time

**9:30 AM —
1:00 PM**

Venue

**Hôtel The People · 84 avenue de
Grammont, Tours**

Organisers

Collectif Créatifs des Territoires — William Hamlet & Annabelle Puget, see online presentation

Audience

Elected officials · AEC professionals · Social housing providers · Students · Residents' associations

1 — Why this workshop? The purpose of the initiative

France's housing crisis is not just a crisis of numbers. It is a crisis of vision. Over time, public policy, professional practice, and academic disciplines have each developed their own specialised approach to housing — and these approaches have largely stopped talking to one another:

- › Access to housing for all — framed almost exclusively through economic and social lenses
- › Environmental performance — treated as a regulatory and technical constraint
- › Residents' quality of life and comfort — routinely relegated to an afterthought or a default assumption

Yet these three dimensions are inseparable. Siloed thinking leads us to treat as separate problems what is, in reality, a single challenge: designing homes that are low-impact, desirable, comfortable, and accessible to all. The 2024 QUALITEL Barometer (4,200 respondents) is a useful reminder: for 80% of French people, home is a cornerstone of personal well-being. Technical performance indicators, however, do not necessarily capture what it actually feels like to live somewhere.

Summer comfort offers the starkest illustration of this gap. Some 48% of new-build homes become "heat traps" during heatwaves — including many of the best-rated on France's energy performance scale: 35% of A- or B-rated homes score poorly on summer comfort. The summer of 2025 resulted in 5,700 heat-related deaths (Santé publique France), exposing the direct health consequences of buildings designed primarily for winter performance. This is precisely the disconnect — between regulatory compliance and lived experience — that this workshop sets out to address.

In short: three silos, one shared reality

- › Housing access is treated as an economic and social issue
- › Environmental performance is treated as a technical and regulatory constraint
- › Residents' quality of life and comfort remain the least structured concern
- › This workshop is built on the conviction that these three dimensions cannot be thought separately — and that residents' actual experience must become the starting point for any design process

2 — How does it work? The workshop format

This is a working session, not a lecture. Participants are arranged in small, deliberately cross-disciplinary groups — elected officials, architects, urban planners, social housing providers, students, and residents' representatives sitting alongside one another — to bring different perspectives into dialogue and break down professional silos.

9:30	WELCOME
10:00	INTRODUCTION Framing the issues, presenting the national context and the methodologies used
10:30	WORKSHOP Small mixed-group work — design thinking & FSSD — co-producing actionable ideas
12:00	REPORTING BACK Group presentations, collective debate, identifying common ground
12:45	CLOSURE Synthesis, next steps, and networking among participants

— Two methods in service of collective thinking

User-centred design thinking — Before designing, we need to understand: how do people actually use their homes? What do they need? What gets in the way of daily life? This investigative stance — rarely built into conventional design processes — places residents' lived experience at the centre of the conversation and grounds the workshop in concrete realities rather than abstract standards.

FSSD (Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development) — A scientific, systemic, and participatory framework for embedding sustainability at the core of professional practice. Drawing on a shared vision of a desirable future and a planning method known as "backcasting from sustainability principles", the FSSD helps practitioners identify the full scope of sustainability challenges and avoid developing "false good ideas" — solutions that appear positive today but undermine long-term transformation. It is designed for organisations, local authorities, and professionals leading change and innovation, providing a shared language and a coherent strategic framework for action. (fssd-france.fr)

3 — What drives this initiative: core values

— Integration, not juxtaposition

Frugal living is not joyless austerity. Designing less but better — guided by how people actually use their homes — produces housing that is more comfortable, more sustainable, and more equitable. This workshop aims to build a shared culture among professionals who work on the same buildings and in the same neighbourhoods, but who do not always speak the same language.

— Start with use

Too many decisions about design, funding, and regulation are made without seriously consulting the people who will live with the consequences. Design thinking puts lived experience back at the centre of the process — a political act as much as a methodological one, and a prerequisite for building homes that are genuinely liveable.

— Think long term, act now

The FSSD provides a framework for grounding short-term decisions in a long-term sustainability trajectory — without setting social urgency against environmental ambition. The two are not in conflict: they reinforce each other.

Expected outcomes

- › A shared understanding of the interconnected challenges of sustainable housing across different professional communities
- › Concrete action ideas, co-produced in the workshop, rooted in the realities of the Tours metropolitan area
- › Networking between actors in housing design, management, and use
- › An introduction to collaborative working methods (design thinking, FSSD) applicable in participants' own professional practice