

UKAMAU MODEL

OF SOCIAL SELF-MANAGEMENT OF HABITAT

Social self-management, habitat production and community governance



People before buildings. The organized community is the subject throughout the entire cycle; architecture is a situated outcome of the social process.

Institutions

Fundación FEMAN
Movimiento de Pobladores Ukamau

Version

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A different way to produce, appropriate and govern habitat

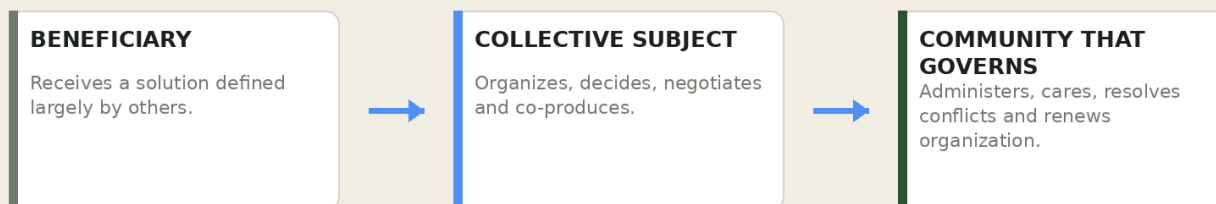
The Ukamau Model transforms organized families into a collective subject with real decision-making capacity and, after handover, into a community capable of governing its habitat.

Official definition

The Ukamau Model is a model of social self-management of habitat through which organized families constitute themselves as a collective subject with real decision-making capacity over the production of their housing and neighborhood, intervening from organization and the definition of their needs through negotiation, design, implementation, appropriation and the subsequent governance of the built habitat.

TWO SHIFTS

FROM BENEFICIARY TO COLLECTIVE SUBJECT



Public formula: Organize, decide, produce and govern habitat.

The model is not architectural: it is a redistribution of power

WHAT IT IS

- A model of social self-management of habitat.
- A process in which the organized community exercises real decision-making power.
- An articulation among organization, the State, technical teams, financing, land and implementation.
- A cycle that continues after handover through community governance of habitation.

WHAT IT IS NOT

- A building typology or a catalogue of physical attributes.
- A recipe requiring the repetition of 62 m², a design, a location or a specific technology.
- Participation understood only as information, consultation or attendance.
- Mandatory self-construction or the unpaid substitution of public responsibilities.

The problem it seeks to address

In conventional social housing production, families often enter at the end of a chain of decisions: they apply, receive information, validate alternatives and ultimately adapt to a solution defined mainly by third parties. Even when participation exists, it may be limited to information or consultation without the power to change substantive decisions.

The Ukamau Model intervenes in this distribution of power. It does not eliminate the State, professionals or companies: it reorganizes their relationships so that the organized community becomes the leading subject and the other actors contribute capacities, resources and obligations to a process of co-production and co-management.

The central question is not only what housing is built, but who decides during the process and who governs after handover.

A Latin American practice that becomes a model

Historical origin

The model is reconstructed from a practice that began before it had a name. Maestranza I documents organized demand, the struggle for well-located land, horizontal relations among families, technical teams and the State, co-design, and the defense of a housing standard. The later experience of Maestranza II deepens a decisive dimension: the community must prepare before moving in and retain governing capacity after handover.

Four conceptual anchors

Social production of habitat

- Organized social control of the process is more important than who physically carries out construction.
- Ukamau belongs to this tradition without requiring direct self-construction.

Autonomy and control

- The question “who decides” shifts the focus from housing as an object to the housing process.
- Autonomy is relational: it is built through negotiation within regulations, subsidies and institutions.

Latin American self-management

- Comparison with experiences such as FUCVAM confirms that self-management does not mean isolation from the State.
- The organization controls strategic decisions and develops collective capacities.

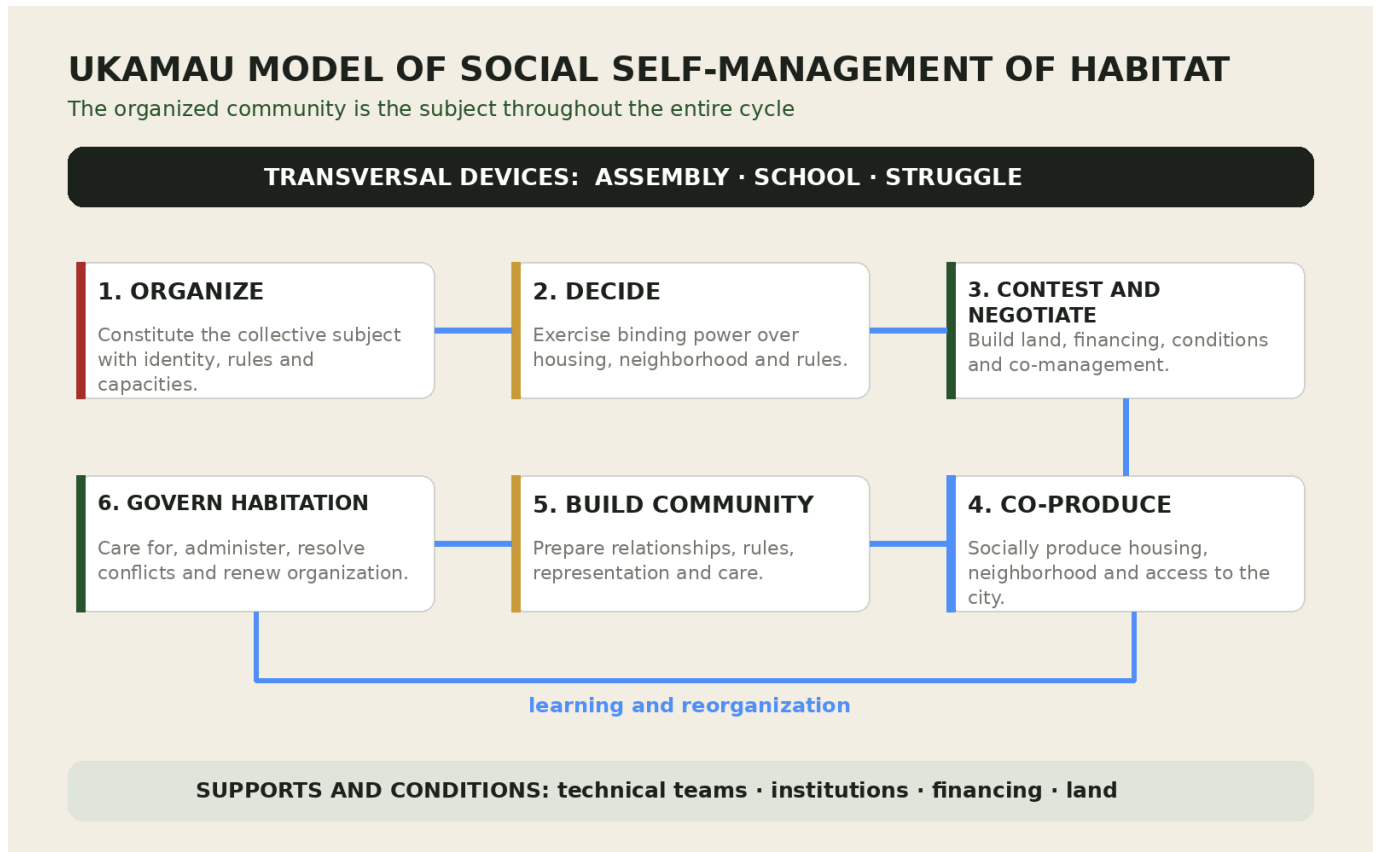
Governance of the commons

- Clear rules, participation, monitoring and conflict resolution sustain shared goods.
- In Ukamau, co-ownership and administration are part of the model, not later add-ons.

References used in the formulation: HIC-AL, John F. C. Turner, FUCVAM, literature on co-production, and Elinor Ostrom.

Six components, three transversal devices and four supports

Version 1.1 adopts a single architecture. The six components constitute the core of the Model; Assembly, School and Struggle run across the entire cycle; technical teams, institutions, financing and land operate as supports and enabling conditions.



The cycle is iterative: Governing Habitation produces learning and reorganization, which feed into a new Organize stage. This return accumulates capacities; it does not create a seventh component.

From organization to the capacity to change conditions

1

ORGANIZE

Function: Constitute the collective subject with identity, rules and capacities.

Mechanisms / areas: Membership, assembly, training, operating agreements, division of tasks, women's leadership, trust and leadership development.

It is not: Compiling an administrative list or formally creating a committee without an organizational process.

2

DECIDE

Function: Exercise binding power over housing, neighborhood and rules.

Mechanisms / areas: Land, location, program, standards, typologies, common areas, allocation, rules, supervision and response to conflicts.

It is not: Informing about decisions already made, validating closed designs or consulting without influence.

3

CONTEST AND NEGOTIATE

Function: Build the land, financing, conditions and co-management required for the process.

Mechanisms / areas: Mobilization, pressure, proposals, negotiation, regulatory knowledge, land management, financing, commitments, deadline control and resolution of blockages.

It is not: Protest without proposals or an institutional agreement without community power.

Co-management means that the State retains its obligations and powers, while the community acts as an organized counterpart with accumulated capacity.

From producing housing to sustaining community and governance

4

CO-PRODUCE

Function: Socially produce housing, neighborhood and access to the city.

Mechanisms / areas: Diagnosis, land, design, standards, project development, financing, construction, supervision, common spaces, allocation and territorial integration.

It is not: A particular architectural form or mandatory self-construction.

5

BUILD COMMUNITY

Function: Prepare relationships, rules, representation and care before moving in.

Mechanisms / areas: Mutual knowledge among families, coexistence, allocation, co-ownership education, common expenses, security, care, representation and preparation of governance bodies.

It is not: A last-minute administrative induction.

6

GOVERN HABITATION

Function: Care for, administer, resolve conflicts and renew organization after handover.

Mechanisms / areas: Regulations, co-owners' assembly, committee, administration, delegates, common expenses, maintenance, security, mediation, participation and leadership renewal.

It is not: Keeping the same leadership indefinitely or confusing community governance with professional administration.

HANDOVER IS NOT THE END → GOVERN HABITATION

Assembly, School and Struggle: capacities that run across the cycle

ASSEMBLY	SCHOOL	STRUGGLE
Deliberate, decide, legitimize and exercise oversight.	Build political, technical, regulatory, financial and community capacities.	Articulate mobilization, pressure, proposals and negotiation to change conditions.

Assembly, School and Struggle are not new components or alternative “pillars.” They are transversal devices that enable deliberation, capacity building, mobilization, proposal-making, negotiation and the sustaining of community power throughout the cycle.

Supports and enabling conditions

Technical teams + institutions

- They translate needs, propose alternatives, identify constraints and ensure feasibility.
- They do not replace the community as the subject of the process.
- The State retains duties, resources, regulation and public responsibility.

Financing + land

- Without adequate resources and land, collective decisions cannot be materialized.
- Location is part of the right to the city, not a secondary variable.
- Conditions must be built through contestation and negotiation.

The technical team is necessary, but it is not the subject of the Ukamau Model.

The cycle moves through six actions and accumulates capacities

For communication purposes, the process can be read sequentially: Organize -> Decide -> Contest and Negotiate -> Co-produce -> Build Community -> Govern Habitation. In practice it is iterative: each conflict, negotiation or governance stage may require renewed organization, decision-making, capacity building and renegotiation of conditions.

WHERE DOES DECISION-MAKING POWER SIT?

CONVENTIONAL PRODUCTION

Families apply and receive

Institutions define program + rules

Technical teams design the project

Companies build

Handover closes the process

UKAMAU MODEL

Organized community constitutes itself + proposes

Assembly / School / Struggle accumulates capacities

State + technical teams co-manage + make viable

Organized community decides + monitors

Habitation governance care + administer + renew

The key difference is not only what is built, but who can change decisions throughout the process

Test of binding participation: it must be possible to demonstrate what decision the community made, what alternatives existed and what would have been different without its organization.

Maestranza I and Maestranza II: learning, deepening and governance of habitation



MAESTRANZA I

Historical laboratory of the Model: organized demand, struggle for well-located land, co-design and horizontal relations among community, technical team and State.

The ARQ publication (2021) records 424 housing units of 62 m² and highlights the capacity of organized demand to bring the State to the same working table.

MAESTRANZA II

It deepens the dimension of community before moving in and governance after handover.

Co-ownership, rules, common expenses, security, care and representation become part of the Model's learning, rather than issues that appear only at the end.

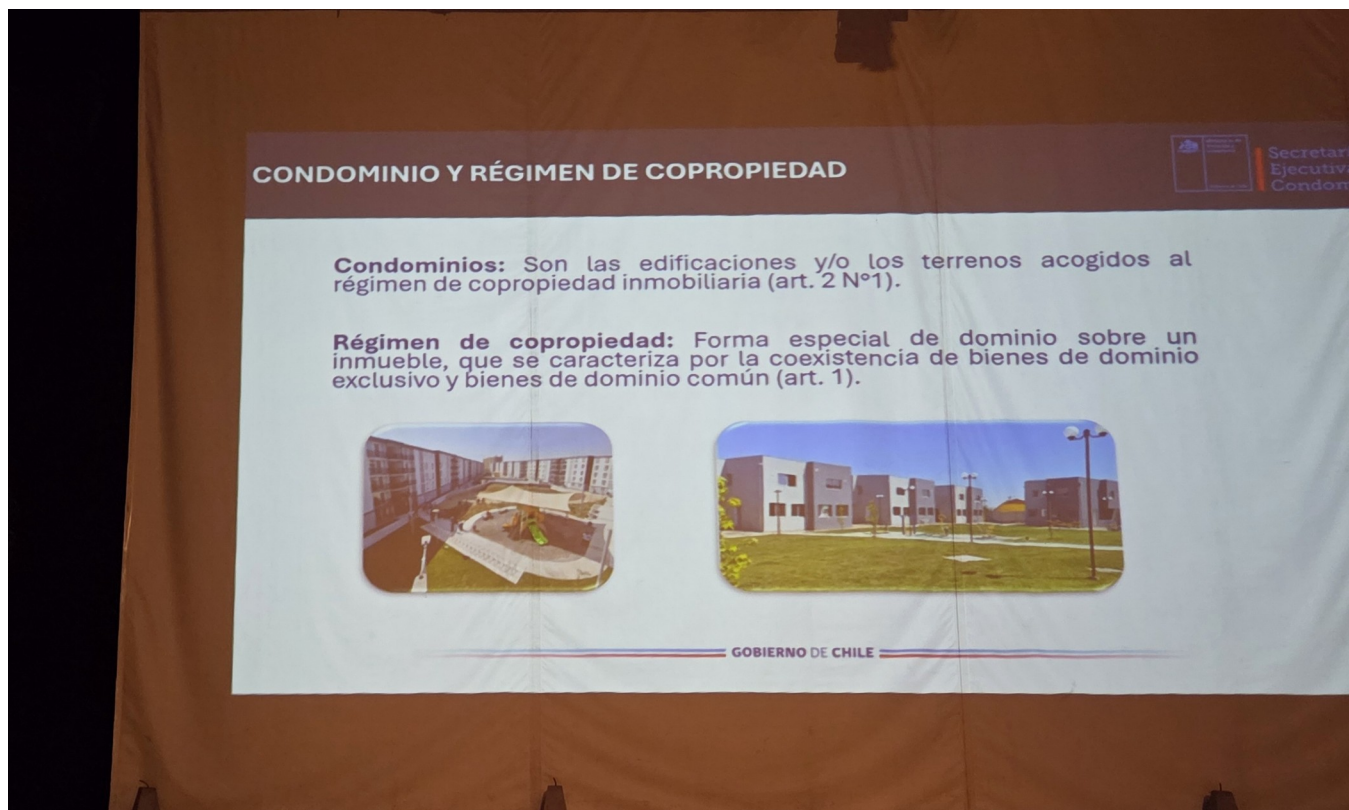
The architectural outcome is evidence of the process. It is not the Model itself.

What the experience requires us to learn

- The community begins to be built before the building.
- Handover is not the end: it opens a new phase of collective responsibilities.
- Everyday governance is a decisive test of the sustainability of collective power.
- Each territorial experience adapts forms, instruments and solutions; the transferable core is the social architecture of the process.

Handover is not the end: governing habitation

The Model's main conceptual evolution is the explicit incorporation of governance after handover. The organization that won housing must be transformed into the capacity to administer, care for, resolve conflicts, renew leadership and reproduce organization.



Training on condominium and co-ownership rules: an example of prior preparation for governing common goods and shared responsibilities.

BEFORE MOVING IN

- Learn the rules and bodies of co-ownership governance.
- Prepare coexistence and allocation criteria.
- Understand common expenses, security and maintenance.
- Distribute responsibilities and develop leadership.

AFTER HANDOVER

- Administer and care for common goods.
- Resolve conflicts through legitimate rules.
- Renew representation and participation.
- Reproduce capacities for new collective decisions.

What can be transferred and what must be adapted

TRANSFERABLE CORE

- Constitute a collective subject.
- Ensure binding decision-making power.
- Build capacity for contestation, negotiation and co-management.
- Co-produce with technical and public capacities.
- Build community before moving in.
- Govern habitation after handover.
- Use Assembly, School and Struggle as transversal devices.

LOCAL ADAPTATION

- Financing instrument and regulatory framework.
- Property regime.
- Typology, materiality and architectural solution.
- Scale and composition of the community.
- Available institutional actors.
- Form of access to land.
- Timelines, repertoires of mobilization and management mechanisms.

Model identity test

If the architect, company, city, typology or financing instrument changes and an element remains necessary for the community to retain real power throughout the cycle, that element belongs to the core of the model. If it disappears with a specific physical solution, it is an outcome, support or contextual adaptation.

Checklist for evaluating an experience

- Is there an organized community acting as a subject, beyond a list of beneficiaries?
- Can it be demonstrated which substantive decisions the community changed?
- Did the organization build conditions through proposals, pressure and negotiation?
- Did the technical team translate and make decisions viable without replacing the community?
- Were relationships, rules and responsibilities prepared before moving in?
- After handover, are there legitimate mechanisms to administer, care for and resolve conflicts?

An urban policy hypothesis built from practice

The contribution of the Ukamau Model does not lie in an isolated innovation. It lies in integrating a cycle in which the organized community retains agency from the constitution of the collective subject through the subsequent governance of habitat.

Synthesis

The Ukamau Model proposes moving from a housing policy centered on delivering an object to a habitat policy centered on the collective capacity to organize, decide, co-produce, appropriate and govern. Architecture matters, but as a situated outcome of social relations, accumulated capacities and concrete decisions.

Its value for the Latin American debate lies in showing that self-management can operate within institutions, subsidies, regulations and professional implementation without surrendering community power. The decisive question is whether organized families retain verifiable decision-making capacity and whether that capacity continues after handover.

Main references and background

Ukamau Model - canonical institutional document: Fundación FEMAN and Movimiento de Pobladores Ukamau, 2026.

ARQ / SciELO - Barrio Maestranza Ukamau: [https://www.scielo.cl/scielo.php?pid=S0717-](https://www.scielo.cl/scielo.php?pid=S0717-69962021000300098&script=sci_arttext)

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World Urban Forum / UN-Habitat - The Ukamau Model: <https://wuf.unhabitat.org/publication/ukamau-model-struggle-housing-regeneration-city>

HIC-AL - Social production of habitat: <https://hic-al.org/que-hacemos/produccion-social/quienes-somos/que-queremos/>

FUCVAM - Cooperative self-management: <https://www.fucvam.org.uy/>

Elinor Ostrom - Nobel Prize Lecture: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/economic-sciences/2009/ostrom/lecture/>

Chilean Law 21.442 on Real Estate Co-ownership: <https://www.bcn.cl/leychile/navegar?idNorma=1174663>

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Reference websites

fundacionfeman.cl · ukamau.cl · redukamau.org · ukamau.cl · redukamau.org

Academic and outreach presentation document. The canonical version of the Ukamau Model 1.1 prevails over any summary, graphic adaptation or derivative presentation.