

PROTOHOME

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*“THE FREEDOM TO MAKE AND REMAKE OUR
CITIES AND OURSELVES
IS ONE OF THE MOST PRECIOUS YET MOST
NEGLECTED OF OUR HUMAN RIGHTS”*

DAVID HARVEY

INTRODUCTION

PROTOHOME was conceived as a project to test how through remaking the city we can remake ourselves in the process. How building and physically marking the city can trigger both an individual process of self-discovery as well as a collective process of learning and imagining.

The premise for PROTOHOME is not so much about creating a finished ‘product’ in the form of a prototype house, but instead lies in the process of becoming that both the house and the people who made it have gone through. For the individuals involved in the project who have experienced homelessness and are members of Crisis, the national charity for single homelessness, building has been a learning process, one that has sometimes been therapeutic and has helped to build confidence. We hope that it has been a (dare we say it) empowering process and we know that it has forged friendships and social ties. For the group the project has created an awareness and a confidence in our ability to self-build housing, something which has largely dropped out of the collective imagination - something that we have un-learned. We hope that this small project is able to infiltrate the imagination of others because building with our hands is one of the most natural and innate things that we can do, but unfortunately the professionalisation of the design and build trades has subsumed our autonomy in housing. But through this project we see how self-build might be reframed as an educational tool, to widen access to housing through participation, particularly for low income or isolated groups.

PROTOHOME is a test, a prototype. It isn’t a full stop, it’s a jumping off point. Although we’ve built a shelter this isn’t a ‘functioning’ house in the normal sense. Instead it provides a small glimpse into more engaged and engaging methods of low-cost and flexible house production, which has a process of learning at its centre.

This isn’t to say that this can’t or shouldn’t be a model which has the potential to be replicated into a fully functioning house in the future. Indeed the idea is that it will be part of a longer term project that can provide homes for people that most need them.

This publication sits alongside a programme of events (talks, film screenings, artist residencies, workshops, public forums, performances) which PROTOHOME hosts. Both the publication and the events surrounding it aim to stimulate a wider public discussion into the issues that have emerged from the project, whilst also creating a space where people can have their say on how the city is shaped. The publication mirrors some of the informal conversations we’ve been having as a group whilst building the house - about homelessness, self-build, learning, the ‘crisis’ of housing and the politics tied up in land and development processes. We hope that both this publication and the wider project might act as a provocation for the city - exerting pressure for more participatory, innovative and sustainable forms of housing for low-income communities which are able to integrate learning opportunities and in the process create social ties.

A huge thank you to everyone that kindly contributed to this publication.

May, 2016

The group testing the building method



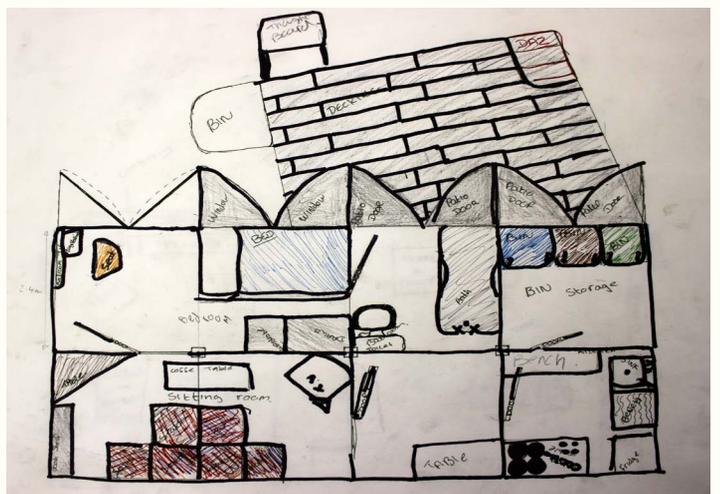
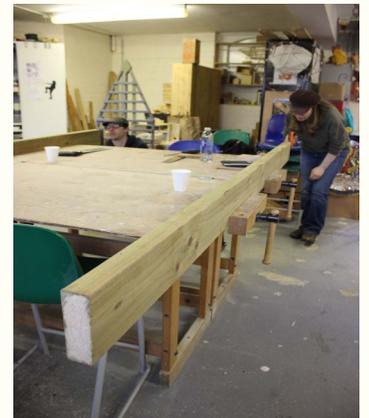
“I’D LIKE TO BE ABLE TO POINT TO IT AND SAY ‘I MADE THAT’”

The process of creating PROTOHOME

PROTOHOME has been a long journey. In fact it’s been nearly two years of thinking through and about. Finally we’ve got to the point of actually building it. This short article focuses on this process, from finding the land, through to the design and then the workshop build sessions.

Firstly, accessing land was a key issue (and generally is for self-build projects). Even though we weren’t looking to permanently site the building, it was still a difficult and long process. A walk around the Ouseburn area with a housing officer from the City Council had us focusing on every site that the council didn’t own. Apparently getting permission to use Council sites is incredibly bureaucratic, having to obtain a licence to use the site, as well as paying a fee to ‘rent’ the space. So - somewhat incredibly - land that is owned by ‘the people’ of the city is pretty inaccessible to those same people! In the end we were kindly offered a site overlooking the Ouseburn Valley by the Ouseburn Trust.

The design was then completed by xsite architecture who are also based in the Ouseburn. This is based on the Segal method of building, which architect Mary Kelly discusses in depth later in this publication. This style of building was chosen because it is specifically designed for untrained self-builders and offers a flexible approach to how a house is designed, built and used. It really makes self-building achievable, even for those without any previous woodwork skills. Learning and training being at the core of this project this system of building offered an approach through which learning could occur whilst building.



Top: At work in the Crisis workshop Bottom: Daz’s design for his house



The design by xsite architecture

The wood workshop at Crisis Skylight is where the build has taken place every Monday and Tuesday. Members of Crisis, all who have experience of homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness, dropped in and out, and some stayed for the whole project. In the end we had a really close, core group. The ‘tutors’, Dean Crawford and Joe Shaw from Tilt Artistic Services, Julia Heslop from Durham University and Dom Booth and Hev Johnson from Crisis, led and supported the group throughout these sessions. The sessions weren’t all about the build though - we were keen to offer some design skills to members. The group learnt the design programme SketchUp (a freely downloadable and easy to use software) visualising how they would transform the space of PROTOHOME if they were to live in it themselves. They first hand drew designs for the house and then put them into SketchUp. We got pretty creative with this (64 inch TVs, in-house wood workshops, and spinning walls were just some of the things included in these designs!) Everyone had very different ideas about how they would use and lay out the space - this being one of the strengths of the Segal system; it is a flexible model, being built on a dimensional frame so that you can easily move walls around and change room formations, even after it’s built.

In the last weeks of the project we took a trip to Belford in Northumberland, near Bamburgh, and visited the Segal house built by architects Mary Kelly and Duncan Roberts. This trip was especially inspiring - many members didn’t believe that it was possible to construct such an impressive home with bare hands and the labour of only two people. Mary and Duncan have been building their home for nearly 15 years in different phases, incrementally building when they had time, money and help. It’s a very free and autonomous approach to housing, where the building happens at the same as time as the dwelling.

During the build workshops we learnt different jointing techniques through mini projects. We built a huge sign to sit on top of PROTOHOME using the practice joints we had made, we had a tenon-making competition, made a huge extendable table with benches, printed t-shirts with the PROTOHOME logo and talked, laughed and drank lots of coffee. We had group conversations about homelessness and the issues of acquiring a house (some of which is included in an article in this publication), we spoke about self-build in the UK but also abroad, in more ‘unlikely’ locations, such as Belize, Borneo and Albania. We spoke about the fact that building has become an overly professional industry. One member mentioned that the imagination to build and create has unfortunately been taken from us:

“I think the ruling classes have got rid of our traditional skills and removed our ability to survive so we have to rely on someone else higher up the chain to help us survive when



Mary and Duncan's Segal-style house catastrophe happens."

As well as reflecting on the loss of the traditional industries of the north-east which made use of skilled (often hand) workmanship:

"Allotments are going, the steel industry has gone, coal mines have shut, shipyards have gone. We've lost the ability to use our hands".

We discussed the merits of using hand tools over power tools. The Segal method makes use of simple dry jointing techniques, and no wet trades are necessary that might require more enhanced training, so we spoke about not needing expensive tools to build a house and being able to do a lot with a hammer, saw, chisel and drill. One member said that,

"using machines is cheating, it's not really made by you it's made by the machine... you can't really learn how to make a thing properly with a machine... it's going to be perfect every time but if you make it with a hand tool you can make it perfect your own way... so you've got more ownership over it".

We spoke about using the skills learnt in the workshop after the project to make personal items for the home:

"I'd like to make a magazine rack for PROTOHOME and one for me. It'd be an achievement - rather than buying it. I'd like to be able to point to it across the room and say 'I made that'."

We spoke about creativity and relearning what this is. This helped us to understand that it's not beyond anybody's imagination to build a house:

"The creative part is not on the peripheral... it runs like a river throughout it... if you have that 'flow' in what you do - it's both healthy, empowering and... energising. When you lose it - or lack the belief that you're capable of it - those thoughts block and disempower and... are exhausting."

All of these actions and conversations helped us to get to know each other and build relationships and social ties. "Socialising, meeting new people, learning new skills" were key to every workshop. One member mentioned:



Group photo on Bamburgh beach

"I didn't really want to get up every morning and go and do things but now I'm getting up and doing it I've got the motivation to do it more". People skills teach you how to communicate with different people. That's why I like this project cos it's made me broaden my horizons".

Working together was key, and as the workshops went on members were teaching each other, instead of the tutors doing the teaching. One member mentioned that helping each other was,

"the sign of something good going on... It's like that social glue. It's like these are dry joints with no glue necessary, and this is a project with no glue necessary... the joints and the strength of this building, that's how communities are, that's how people are."

Maybe this is a prototype for further collective self-build housing projects for low income or potentially isolated or homeless individuals. One of our members said:

"I think it's good for people who are looking for work, if you're building anything it creates jobs for people, so that's another plus side to the project. If you build plenty of these houses you're getting people into work at the same time."

This project was designed as a learning exercise, both for the group and the initiators, to test these methods of building, training and learning. However, in thinking beyond this project, it can't be ignored that Newcastle has a big absence of self-help or self-build housing organisations or projects. However, the city and the region still suffers from intergenerational unemployment and a growing homeless population. We hope that this project can initiate a conversation into housing that connects self-build with self-help in which building is reframed as an educational and therapeutic tool, to widen access to housing through participation, particularly for low income groups, in the vein of this quote from one of the members of the group:

"I think, fundamentally, that being involved in a collective, community-based, socially-grounded-and-rooted project like this allows real growth and change across the board - and at a rapid pace, to boot. Construction. Solid, long-lasting, sustainable construction - which itself has room for growth, expansion and continuing development - all involves tapping into both the individual and collective skillsets and creativity".

WHAT IS A SOCIOLOGIST DOING STUDYING SELF-BUILD?

Michaela Benson on *shifting perspectives from Grand Designs to housing inequality*

I'm a sociologist, and I study self-build.

This may come as a surprise to you; it certainly does to several of the people that I have met and worked with over the course of my research into self-build. A psychologist, yes, but what is a sociologist doing studying self-build? Part of this lies precisely in thinking about what a sociological approach might bring to the study of self-build, but also in thinking about self-build not as an idiosyncratic practice, but in relation to other forms of housing. This means shifting from the individualised stories of self-build that are so often the focus of *Grand Designs*—Channel 4's long running and popular TV series about self-builders—and into the careful consideration of self-build as a form of housing provision; the diversity of the ways in which self-build might be delivered and to who; how it relates to other forms of housing and what this reveals about the structures of the housing and land economy.

First, we might need to ask, what is self-build?

Where the first occupants arrange for the building of their own dwelling and, in various ways, participate in its production (Duncan and Rowe 1993: 1331)

Focused on self-build as a form of housing self-provision this a vision of self-build that does not presume anything about the self-builder; for example, there is no focus on their need to finance, or to engage in sweat equity, it simply states that they need to be engaged in how the house is produced, while leaving it open as to what this might look like. And it is this focus on production that brings self-build into sharper focus from a sociological perspective. Indeed, this focus brings to mind key sociological concerns over the means of production and how this is caught up in the reproduction of inequalities, a way of questioning the intersections of housing and social structure.

Understood in this way, a sociological approach to self-build has the potential to move beyond the aesthetics of the individual home into thinking more deeply about the shape of the self-build sector, what this tells us about the wider housing economy in Britain, and how self-build figures in the political economy of housing. To begin with, it is necessary to consider how it relates to the wider context of the housing economy in Britain. We know that rents, property and land values are soaring out of control accompanied by an escalation in housing inequality. Further, the British housing market is idiosyncratic in comparison to its European equivalents in that the very small share is made up by new housing, such provision dominated by a small number of national housebuilders - profit-driven private companies. This is the first stage in thinking about self-build sociologically, but it also starts to answer the question of why we should care about self-build; the focus on these issues allows for a better sense of what needs to be done in order that more people have access to self-build, a form of housing provision that has the potential to respond to our current housing crisis. So, how we can realise the potential for self-build to do this?

In the London Borough of Lewisham—conveniently on my doorstep—self-build has a history. Driving round the streets of Honor Oak Park and Sydenham, you can see the Walter Segal-inspired housing developments—distinguished by their flat roofs and simple, light-weight wooden structures—that the council organized and financed in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

These were explicitly promoted as a way of getting people on the housing waiting list into housing fit to their family needs. Fast forward thirty years, and a new scheme—the Rural and Urban Synthesis Society (<http://www.theruss.org>)—a volunteer-led community land trust aimed at building new homes to provide affordable rental accommodation for local young people is underway. In March 2015, a council-supported self-build scheme in Walthamstow saw ten families move into their new homes; they might otherwise have had to wait ten years for if they had remained on the housing waiting list. These schemes, both past and present, are inspirational, they provide urgent solutions to very real problems that people face in accessing housing suitable for their circumstances; but we need more. So how can we do this?

The answer lies precisely in working on loosening the structural constraints that mean that self-build is only accessible to those with significant financial backing. In the last few years, there have been a series of initiatives aimed precisely at doing this, including changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, the development of a small custom build sector, and recent changes to the budget that aid community-led development of housing. Each of these initiatives has been hard won, the result of tireless work by a small number of passionate individuals, and provides signs of some alternatives—both within and beyond the market—to the mainstream, mass production of new housing by profit-driven property development companies. Certainly, the intentions behind this are to scale up self-build in Britain, to move it from a niche industry and practice into a realisable alternative to the status quo.

My approach to understanding self-build has been on the ways in which the current housing economy structures and constrains the possibilities for self-building in Britain, and what this focus in turn reveals about the deep-seated problems with housing provision. In this way, I have used self-build as a lens through which to examine the wider issues at play in housing in Britain today. Simply put, the difficulties that many of the self-builders in my study faced as they tried to find land, navigate planning, finance their build, employ contractors and subcontractors, etc. were challenges not only to them but also telling of the housing industry, housing finance and land economy of which self-build is a small part. Interviewing a researcher from one of the major housing charities for the project brought this home very clearly; when I asked what the charity's interest in self-build was, he stressed that many of the concerns that self-build advocates raise are actually indicative of wider problems within the housing and land economy that in turn exacerbate social problems of housing inequality and homelessness. Recognising that self-build is nested within these economies breaks it away from the rather idiosyncratic position it might otherwise occupy if we focus only on *Grand Designs*. These brief reflections are just the beginning of thinking about how we might think through self-build sociologically, enhancing understandings of the housing economy and its relationship to housing inequality and its solutions.

Michaela Benson is a Sociologist at Goldsmiths, University of London. The research reported here is drawn from her recently completed Economic and Social Research Council funded project 'Self-building: the production and consumption of new homes from the perspective of households'. Find out more about it on her blog <https://self-buildproject.wordpress.com> or get in touch at michaela.benson@gold.ac.uk.

GROUP SELF BUILD IN LEWISHAM USING 'THE SEGAL METHOD'

Mary Kelly

The architect, Walter Segal (1907-1985) came from a Romanian Jewish family with a background in banking and a father who moved away from Bucharest to Paris and then Berlin – becoming a well-known artist in the process. Walter himself was born in Berlin, moving with the family in 1914 to the Italian part of Switzerland - as a refuge from the War - where they settled in Ascona, considered a cultural hub at the time. A man small in height but with huge knowledge and diverse interests resulting in several works of substance and influence, he came to the UK in 1935 to develop a monograph on Egyptian chairs, diverted into becoming a London architect and tutor, and went on to centre his research and practice on the design and development of post-war housing. His work in both research and practice focused increasingly on the 'small house' as a demonstration of his view that "nothing is so difficult to design as a good house" (Segal, 1948).

These days he is the architect who is best known for designing a self-build system - for housing and other buildings - based on a timber frame construction and often referred to as 'the Segal Method'. Designed and utilised initially as a simple and easy way to provide a temporary and cheap housing solution for his family during the construction of their permanent new home in North London, Segal soon realised its potential as a system that could be employed by others wanting to build their own homes.

The modular, dry jointed system featured structural timber posts and beams designed around a grid based on the dimensions of commonly available standard building sheet materials – making it possible for people without skills or training to build and customise - simple, affordable and flexible homes for themselves. No special tools or equipment were needed and the method is readily adaptable and open to user interpretation, both in the building process itself and in its future use.



Walters Way, Lewisham ©James Drew Turner

Having developed the building method, Segal saw its potential as a viable housing option on a wider scale going on to refine and develop the method for use on other projects and for a range of different – usually individual - clients. His most enduring legacy however, came in his later years when his architectural career focused on trying to find a solution to housing problems in England – and Lewisham, in South East London, became the key location for the development of his timber-framed, self-build houses.

Segal Close and Walters Way in Lewisham, South London, are the sites of Walter Segal's experiments in self-built housing. Twenty-seven houses were built over two phases of construction from 1977 onwards and form part of the earliest low-cost self-build project housing in the country.



Walters Way, Lewisham ©James Drew Turner

At Walter's Way, thirteen houses were built between 1984 and 1987 on a sloping site. The layout of the dwellings set at different angles to their neighbours and to the road access - so as to maximise the benefits of the individual plots. Design development and building work was supervised by Jon Broome, an architect and associate of Walter Segal who had worked with him on the first self build scheme.

The sites eventually allocated for the self-build proposals were conventionally unbuildable and thus considered commercially unviable - a steep slope, two pieces of scrap land, and the suburban garden of a villa - but were all eminently suitable for buildings using Walter Segal's framed construction method.

In conjunction with developing and refining his proposals for using 'the method' to enable people to build for themselves Walter Segal developed a plan for self-built housing on short-leased local authority land. His method of construction was not only designed to reduce waste of material and labour, but also to allow homes to be built on small and awkward sites – most likely to be unused by local councils and considered unprofitable for development commercially.

The London Borough of Lewisham agreed to undertake Segal's housing experiment, by one vote. However, even at this

stage the project had to continue negotiations and overcome bureaucratic obstacles. Through the persistence of Segal and others supporting the proposals, from within and outside the council, the local authority was eventually persuaded by three key arguments to approve the scheme nearly five years later:

- The land would otherwise not be used
- The housing was cheap and most importantly came at a fixed price
- The council would have no maintenance responsibility.

Lewisham Borough Council initially made three small sites available in 1977 through their Housing Committee, under the Chairmanship of Nicholas Taylor. The Segal method was fully implemented in these three Lewisham sites in two phases - the success of the first phase generating local authority permission for the second. Families on the Borough's housing waiting list were offered the chance to undertake the building of their homes using the Segal method - enabling the involvement of inexperienced self-builders.

168 people attended the meeting to decide to whom the scheme of self-build houses should be granted - and from amongst this large group 14 participating families were then selected by ballot. Walter Segal designed all the buildings providing the builders with basic freehand drawings. There were eight different house types in total, ranging from single storey dwellings in Bromley and Sydenham, to seven storeys on the steep site of Forest Hill.

Self-builders included men and women of various ages and backgrounds who were given basic training in building processes - taking evening classes in plumbing and electrical skills for example - and there was an option of employing specialist contractors. Each self-builder was provided with basic plans, sections and a specification that described the sequence of construction. Within the set grid they were able to make adaptations to the lightweight, dry and demountable construction system, which was screwed or bolted together.

Through making use of materials that are readily available and simple to work with and removing the need for any wet trades the system enabled people without specialist skills to build together - developing confidence, friendships and skills, helping each other and building a strong and lasting community in the process.



© Jon Broome

Walter died suddenly at the age of 78 during the construction of this second Lewisham project. Jon Broome went on to design and support a number of successful self-build projects using the Segal method in London and elsewhere through his practice, Architype and with South London Family Housing Association (SLFHA).

The Question of Land

Although the Segal method has been applied in many instances beyond the initial projects in Lewisham, the concept of short-leased land teamed with self-built housing has never been considered by mainstream housing providers and funders to be a viable mainstream housing solution.

Despite offering obvious value-for-money in terms of both building and land costs, bureaucracy generally remains too complicated to allow the Segal method to flourish. But just as importantly, in an environment where the private sector is an increasingly dominant provider and controller of new housing development, these schemes are considered to present a challenge to the prevailing view that self-build can only be delivered through developer involvement. In order for individuals, co-operatives, housing associations or local authorities to proceed with the method, there are still too many hoops to jump through, including:

- Access to land: the market value for land has largely been controlled by local authorities and developers rather than individuals.
- Non-experts: policy does not support or facilitate non-expert agency within the built environment, "authorities grossly underestimate ordinary people's abilities, energy and trustworthiness" (Jon Broome, architect and self-builder).
- Public awareness: self-build housing has failed to develop strong mainstream exposure and its benefits are not fully promoted.

Now, as then, the primary constraint is the availability and price of land. In 1971 Segal said "It sounds absurd that one should try to search for methods of building cheaply when we have the impossible problem of accelerating land cost and do nothing about it" (McKean, 1989). By the 1960s land accounted for 40% of building costs, 15 years earlier it had been 5%; now the price of land can easily exceed 100% of any building costs - doubling overall development costs. Walter Segal saw that local authorities owned large quantities of underused land. He felt that this land should form a 'national land bank' with less power being held by local authorities over its use. Then the land could be leased to groups or individuals (like a self-build group) for a time-span relative to the expected life of the building. His plan would free-up huge quantities of disused land and labour (in the form of self-builders), offering a truly radical alternative for housing in the UK. These days, the closest we get to an alternative model is that proposed by Community Land Trusts where the land remains in the ownership of the community.

For more information and images of the Lewisham self build schemes please see the Project Sheet: <http://www.segalselfbuild.co.uk/projects/waltersway,lewis.html>

Short films made recently but featuring the original schemes at Lewisham can be seen as follows:

2015 - LSE: Alternative Housing - lessons from a visit to three South London schemes including Walters Way - 12 mins: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HXtOvOv_A8s

2013 - Architecture Foundation: Walters Way documentary (10 minutes) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJbqJNAUOR8>
Interviews with Dave Days, Jon Broome, Alice Grahame, Florian Beigel/ Philip Christou.

Other Projects

The self-build method espoused by Walter Segal was followed on a number of later schemes, including eight free-standing four-bedroom houses at Parish Wharf in Greenwich.



Parish Wharf, Greenwich

These chalet-like houses were self-built in 1992-95 by members of Co-operative Housing in South-East London (CHISEL) with the support of the architects, Architype, then led by Jon Broome. CHISEL are responsible for about 250 homes in South-East London, Colchester and Brighton, of which about a third are self-build, energy efficient Segal properties that were constructed by the tenants who mostly still live in them.



Hedgehog Housing, Brighton ©Julia Heslop

More recently Architype – again with SLFHA - were responsible for developing Hedgehog Housing in Brighton, a co-operative of ten self-built homes completed in 2001. Based on Segal methods like standard dimensions and on-site construction but using details and materials which had continued to evolve in the twenty years since the Lewisham schemes were designed, these well-insulated, ecologically sound homes were constructed on a steep and awkward site. The scheme was collaboratively designed with the self-builders and was the winner of the DOE/RIBA/NHBC Housing Design Award.

Featured during the building process on Grand Designs the scheme was re-visited by the programme in 2012. A link to the programme following the original construction and showing the later visit can be found here:

2012 - C4 Grand Designs: Hedgehog original programme 1999-2000 and revisit 2012 [46 mins] https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xxrtid_gd-s12-e12_news?start=0

Mary Kelly is an architect and self builder who studied with Walter Segal. Currently practicing and building in Northumberland she combines both with part-time teaching at the University of Central Lancashire and her work as an external examiner for professional studies courses with various universities throughout the UK and abroad.

Hedgehog Housing, Brighton ©Julia Heslop



'GIVE ME YOUR HAND AND I'LL TEACH YOU HOW TO BUILD'

Learning from home-building in Albania

Julia Heslop

We are clinging onto the last dregs of a welfare state. In housing terms we seem unable or unwilling to deal with a growing housing crisis, whilst the streets beat with the feet of more people with no home, no place to go. In the wake of the recession we are told we need to 'get the market moving' - the national economy being tied so closely to the housing and mortgage market. This marketisation of housing has transformed our imagination of it; removed it from being a basic human right, connected with ideas of home and shelter, to one aligned with wider monetary policy, investment, and the endless cycle of boom and bust. Our obsessions with the housing market are all too evident. Everyday there are new newspaper articles on the rise and fall of the housing market: the boom in London or the depression in the north; an ex-council house sold for £500,000, Russian billionaires buying London property and leaving it empty, gazumping and homesteading, stararchitects gentrifying ex-social housing. We've all bought into the narrative that a house is no longer just a home, it is now collateral - a pension, an investment, the inheritance for the children, a commodity to be bought and sold. And how can we blame? Pensions are stagnant and my generation - the Millennials - who were once cradled in the arms of the baby boomers, are now floundering.

So what happens when the government 'pulls out'? Where are our coping strategies for a limping welfare state? We take our weekly benefit but it comes at a cost. Institutionalisation and regulation means that we can't turn to self-help strategies. The stranglehold of the system has us in chains which impedes our hands from building, from creating, from remaking. When the welfare state is pulled from under us we have no options. We can't build for ourselves or squat in empty properties, instead we rely on rogue landlords and an over-priced and unregulated private rental sector.

So, in the face of all of the above, how can the West's current imagination of housing be any kind of progressive model? We need to return to an idea of house as home and challenge the obsession with markets, booms and busts. This also means that we need new methods for creating housing that connects people, participation and place.

I saw this tentatively in Albania, in Bathore, a so-called 'informal' (illegal) settlement in the district of Kamza, a place which clings onto the fringes of Tirana, the capital city. During Communism Kamza was a collective dairy farm where 5,000 people lived but over the past 25 years it has grown to house over 100,000 inhabitants. This mirrors wider trends in Albania where neoliberal capitalism has come hard and fast and a crippled welfare state

and a huge lack of affordable housing has meant that nearly 55% of the population now live 'informally'.

Bathore itself was developed in the haze and confusion of the post-communist period. This was a time of turmoil, of 'There is no state, there is no law', where squatting on land and illegally building were rife. The majority of people that have enabled Bathore's transition from rural to urban were agricultural workers themselves - farmers from the north, desperate and penniless, who made the long trip down from the mountains to the capital. What they found when they got there was empty land, and the belief stuck that if the state owned the land then no-one owned it. In the first years that migrants arrived they had no electricity, no water, no infrastructure of any kind and had to contend with a constant threat of eviction and the government's bulldozer.

If anything, Bathore really is a city built by people. Just about every family has self-built their home and they have been very efficient at it too. During the 90s the simplest one storey house could be constructed for between £4,000-£8,000 or £30-£40 per square metre, at a time when the government was building for 5 times more than that and the private sector for 10 times more (Aliaj et al., 2004). Remittances received from family members working in Italy and Greece have kept the cycle of building going. Buildings go up, up, and further up and still the building continues: steel rods set into concrete protrude from the tops of houses - the mortar is set, but not for long. The next remittance might build a veranda, the one after that will get the tiles for the roof or get the plumbing in. The building is always incremental. When migrants first arrived they 'marked' the land by putting stones around it and then built a shack, or a 'barrack' made from wood and clay, then started to build more permanent houses. This was always a process of testing the authorities. Clearly improvisation in building and everyday living has been crucial in Bathore and residents use creative ways to reduce the costs of building, ranging from employing cheap materials to decreasing labour costs by involving relatives and neighbours in the building process. So building incrementally doesn't only signify the precarity of household economies and the role that remittances play in the construction process of informal settlements, but also signifies an idea about the future; about plans and aspirations; a certain second agenda.

It is in these incremental processes of building that we can see processes of thinking through making, through practice, trying and testing. One builder mentioned: "Most people know how to build with their minds - nobody takes engineers". So most self-builders in Bathore lack formal technical knowledge, yet this is



Bathore in 1994 (Photo credit: John Driscoll, IIUD)



Bathore in 2007 (Photo credit: John Driscoll, IIUD)



The building process

learnt through processes of doing that are rooted in material reality, where “technical understanding develops through the powers of imagination” and like Richard Sennett says “all skills, even the most abstract, begin as bodily practices” (Sennett, 2008: 10). This adaptable approach shows vitality and energy and is an alternative to the ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to housing, addressing the challenges of financing homes for low-income groups, particularly in a period of change or crisis. Moreover these have been collaborative acts of self-building. One man said, “About 35 people... from my village helped me build my home. They helped, without money, just helped”. Another said “We helped each other to build. We were volunteers... every week we were working for 6 days but on the Sunday we helped each other to build. We didn’t take money, we just went there, worked, and drank raki or beer... we were very happy”.

Through these co-operative rituals of building social ties were formed in the process. The great self-help housing advocate John Turner (1977: 5) said: “the important thing about housing is not what it *is*, but what it *does* in people’s lives”. Turner defined housing as a verb arguing that housing is best provided and managed by those who are to dwell in it through the self-building and self-management of housing and neighbourhoods, rather than being centrally administered by the state. He believed

that western nations had forgotten the basic resources of house building because removing dwellers themselves from the decision-making process of their housing had alienated them from the end product.

This indicates a real need for the West to unlearn and relearn ways of imagining and creating homes and cities by looking further afield to places deemed ‘insignificant’ on the world stage; places that don’t necessarily fit ‘the clean and safe tourist agenda’ of glittering financial districts or corporate capital. It also means that we must traverse some of the psychological and imaginary boundaries that surround place on a local and a global level, deconstructing predominant ideas about what is a ‘viable model’ of housing and who holds the knowledge.

Yet these participatory and collaborative processes of making can only be practiced if we confront the dualism of the ‘professional’ and the ‘amateur’ – the belief that only professionals can build, can create housing. In a sense we have become conditioned to believe that we can’t it’s like the great anarchist....It’s about relearning innate skills of putting hand to material and it’s about breaking down western norms of thinking to take back control. If we manage to confront the question of ‘who builds?’ we may then be able to overcome housing’s disembeddedness from life and begin a dialogue that connects housing with ideas of collaboration, creativity and learning, like I witnessed in Albania.

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One of the main aspects of the PROTOHOME project has been to share experiences of home and homelessness and how housing precariousness has framed the group's lives.

One question that we came back to throughout the course of the project was that of what is homelessness? Is this street homelessness? Are you homeless if you are in hostel accommodation or sofa surfing? One member mentioned:

"I wasn't on the streets... I had a roof over [my head]... dossing on people's sofas and stuff like that so I wouldn't class that as homeless. [Homelessness is] just sleeping rough."

Others differed, saying that 'hidden homelessness' was real and felt, "it's not just that person in the doorway" but the person sleeping in their car, moving between hostels, staying on a friend's or parent's sofa. These forms of hidden homelessness are evidently growing. Research for Crisis in 2011 found that the majority of homeless people are living outside of mainstream hostel accommodation. Much of Crisis' research focuses on single homelessness and they found that "single homelessness and hidden homelessness are synonymous. In other words, to be a single homeless person in England in the main is to be 'hidden' (from support, advice and statistics)" (Crisis, 2011: 2). The same report also found that many of the hidden homeless are misinformed about their entitlements, pushed aside by local authorities and therefore often not given the opportunity to apply for homeless assistance (Crisis, 2011: 2).

it's very difficult to get it back and prisons won't release people unless they have a bail address which is quite often a hostel. One member said that hostels "are bail hostels, basically" with people going in and out and back and forth in a cycle which is very difficult to get out of:

"Eventually I did end up into the hostel system, and once you're in, try getting out cos it's virtually impossible. Once you're in a hostel, you just go from there to there to there to there."

Members also spoke about the close connection between the physical environment of the hostel and that of the prison. "Magnaolia walls", constant bedroom checks, body searches, no visitors allowed policies. "It gives you that institutional mentality, so it's very difficult to leave that environment and live independently." One member mentioned that they "need that control on a situation and I think you lose it when you get into the system." So inside the hostel you are subject to a system of control that can have very negative implications:

"There's something about when you muck up and you make mistakes and you end up in a hostel, no matter how well meaning the staff are, that you're then treated as someone that has problems and that can't be trusted to get back themselves."

This suggests a certain pathological approach to homeless-

CONVERSATIONS ON HOME AND HOME-LESSNESS

The hostel circuit

Beyond the 'hidden' experience of homelessness that many members of the group have had, the other focus of our conversations was often about hostel accommodation. Hostels inevitably provide a service for homeless people and can be a lifeline, providing support networks and access to services, as well as friendships and social ties. Members of the group spoke about the good times had in hostels, but more often than not hostels were discussed with a certain resentment.

There were stories of hostels being unsafe, acting as,

"a kind of pressure cooker because very often people... they're on their last gasp and there's huge problems. So everyone's trying to coexist in a little community but... things kick off all the time, you know, police are in and out all the time in my hostel."

So "You're as much subject to abuse inside a hostel as you are outside". One member mentioned that they like "a bit of peace and quiet" but this is very hard to find in a hostel, and sleeping on the streets is often a better option for getting a good night's sleep: "I went on the streets and I've slept ten hours like that solid". Hostels can also be places that can make a personal situation worse, where troubles are intensified: "I got into more trouble than anywhere else, more drugs than anywhere else" living in hostels.

We spoke about the prison-hostel cycle, which is a common issue - once you've lost the tenancy on your house and go to prison

ness, one that removes agency from the individual and deepens feelings of helplessness and shame as one member mentioned that they felt they were perceived as "a scrounger, waster, you're on the dole, you're in a hostel, get yourself a job".

Austerity and the punitive state

This pathological approach to homelessness has arguably intensified through austerity policies and welfare reforms. Members of our group spoke about constant Jobcentre meetings, the measures taken if they failed to attend or sign on, the evidence required to prove you are 'actively' looking for work and the resulting feeling of being a drain on the state. The welfare state has inevitably transformed through the long years of austerity and there is now evidence to suggest that homelessness, once more directly connected to family breakdown, drug or alcohol dependency and mental health problems may now be seen to be a direct result of austerity policies enforced first by the coalition government and now by the Conservative government. Research by Crisis shows that from 2010-2015 two thirds of local authorities in England reported homelessness in their area had increased due to welfare reforms. In the north, local authorities most commonly cited the extension of the Shared Accommodation Rate for 25-34 year olds which limits housing benefit to a maximum amount deemed necessary to afford a room in a shared property. The research also found that in the north benefit sanctions and financial hardship were the main issues driving homelessness. Crisis' latest Homeless Monitor from January 2016 states that there has been an ongoing rise in rough sleeping, which increased by 55% in England from 2010-2014, the bulk of which is due to

sharply rising numbers previously housed in the private rental sector, with these cases almost quadrupling, growing from 11 per cent in 2009/10 to 29 per cent in 2014/15 (Crisis, 2016). There are also concerns about areas of England (London in particular) that are already exposed to falling levels of social housing as most private rental housing is priced beyond that of what the poor can afford. This affordability issue is intensified through bad conditions and a lack of regulation of the private rental sector. This is all coupled with cuts to homelessness prevention strategies, with many local authorities discharging their statutory responsibilities for homelessness.

As well as austerity measures and welfare reforms we are seeing increasingly punitive measures for rough sleeping and begging. Councils such as Nottingham have launched aggressive anti-begging campaigns, with posters around the city declaring: 'Begging: watch your money go to a fraud' and 'Begging: watch your money go up in smoke', alongside an image of a person smoking marijuana. In Newcastle the council are putting a Public Space Protection Order in place to "crack down on anti-social behaviour" (Newcastle City Council, 2016). Councillor Nick Kemp, the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services, said that,

"There are a number of anti-social behaviours in the city centre that upset and irritate the public. These include chuggers, aggressive beggars and people on legal highs... It's important for the vibrancy and commercial success of Newcastle that we deal effectively with these behaviours if they are not to put people off coming in. That's why we are proposing to use new powers to impose Public Space Protection Orders".

The heavy-handed language used in these statements is inevitably designed to increase public hostility towards beggars at a time when councils are decreasing homeless prevention services as a result of central government cuts. These type of punitive measures have been more prominent in the US than in the UK, however this is now a growing phenomena in UK cities. The homeless should be 'out of sight and out of mind', banished to the margins, and not present in our city centres. In the quote above, Nick Kemp overtly highlights the desire to 'cleanse' urban space to make it more attractive to visitors and investors. This type of language has also been taken up in a recent campaign by the Tyneside Cinema in Newcastle, who are attempting to raise public money for the transformation of the "sometimes unsavoury" High Friar Lane at the entrance to the cinema (often where beggars are present). 'From Grot to Grotto' the campaign posters tell passers by. These type of campaigns by councils or organisations who receive public funding goes alongside a certain 'hardening' of the urban landscape – 'bum proof' benches, spiked pavements and sprinkler systems. The rise of the Business Improvement District (in Newcastle called NE1) offers another route to cleanse the streets and police public space and therefore street homelessness. For Don Mitchell (1997: 311), this regulation and 'purification' of public space is leading to nothing less than the "annihilation of homeless people" and their geographies, "creating a world in which a whole class of people simply cannot be, entirely because they have no place to be". This connects to certain ideas about citizenship - who is a citizen of the city and what their rights are to use city space. In 'Homelessness, Citizenship, and Identity' Arnold (2004) writes that "homelessness is a politicoeconomic problem that undermines the notion of universal citizenship". Without an address you can't vote, can't get social security, can't access a GP. In fact voting was



Poster from Nottingham Council's 'Give Smart' Campaign (The Mirror)

originally tied to property. Before the 1832 Reform Act the right to vote (for men only of course) hinged on whether you owned property over a certain value. Only people who had a 'stake in the country' (by owning property and paying taxes) were free to take part in politics.

As mentioned above, the worsening state/access to both public and private housing highlights that it is becoming increasingly obvious that homelessness is utterly entangled within property relations, even more so than prior to the economic crash of 2008. This is happening at the same time that punitive measures for rough sleepers and beggars are being rolled out in cities around the UK. May et al. (2010: 63) write that "the visible presence of even quite small numbers of homeless people comes to stand for much deeper failings – of the welfare contract, for example, or of the vitality and wealth of the post-industrial city". This needs to go further and say that homelessness whether 'hidden' or 'visible' speaks for much wider social, political and moral failings.

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THE LIVERPOOL GUIDE TO EMPTY PLACES

Jeff Young

On this day we are strangers. There are dogs on these streets and a scrap metal Jesus screaming on a cross. Everywhere there are dead buildings bleeding weeds. I used to know a man who lived in a house where this empty place now stands (if empty spaces can stand). In any case, there is weather where there used to be a kitchen. There are fireweeds and willow-herb where the man once cooked his supper fish.

In the Liverpool Guide To Empty Places, the listing for this particular void has this to say:

A missing tooth in a crooked mouth.

A pause between two verses in a sad, old song.

A space between nostalgia and the uncertain future.

A wilderness of weed and wind.

A ghost-place where death waits.

An echo chamber where voices still sing along to old radio programmes.

A place where the memories of an old man hang, tattered on nettle and thistle.

The man I knew – the man who used to live in this absence – once grew roses on a trellis at his gate. He used to prune the roses with a pair of pinking shears. He used to bend and breath the perfume, lingering with pleasure, until the day the bulldozers came and he deadheaded his last bloom. He used to nod and say 'hello' to me and I quite liked feeling included in his act of resistance. His was the last house standing and his roses were a symbol of dissent. 'Hello! O Defiant One!' I used to murmur, tipping him the nod each morning.

Now, on this day when we are strangers, in the empty place where the rose lover once lived, there is a single red rose growing amongst the willow herb and weeds and the heaps of brick and mortar that used to be a home. Red rose, defiant rose, rose of wild resistance, all knees and elbows, bloody thorned and mad. And everywhere in Liverpool, in all the empty places there are ghosts of old awkward buggers bending to the perfume of a rose...

THE CITY ARCHITECT

Martin Heslop

In the structure, a dislocation, a movement. A crack towards critical. The surrounding planes bent round the edge of the terminating plane. Damage is cumulative. Materials do not recover when rested

I am the City Architect. I can't bear to be near the buildings now. I picture every roof falling, every wall crumbling. I wait for the cement and the bricks to dessicate, for the rumble of collapse to begin. I mutter the rules of angles, Greek rules, like sacred prayers, as if they will shore up the foundations with their consecration. I have money in the bank but I can't go in to take it out. I sleep outside, but not under bridges or against walls, I search for the empty plots, the wild wastegrounds. I sleep away from constructions, below the stars falling from light years away – only a distant danger. I need to be anchored to the earth

Fatigue life varies widely for different materials. The greater the applied stress range, the shorter the life. Oil or seawater reduce the fatigue life at a greater rate. Welding, cutting, casting, grinding decrease fatigue strength. Environmental conditions cause erosion, corrosion, or gas-phase embrittlement. Corrosion fatigue is encountered in aggressive environments

I see the tower on the skyline, reaching up as if to pierce the stratosphere and reveal god, and I can see the twenty four thousand windows, lights going on and off, all of woman and all of man blinking from up high. I can see the plans in front of me, the drawings, the measurements and list of materials and cost, and I can feel the heavy envelope being pressed into my hand. I am the City Architect. At night I dream jagged dreams of children, old friends of mine, riding gyroscopes through maelstrom and purgatory, down to a blind world beneath. I used to dream of axioms and measurements. I used to dream of straight lines, now I dream of this. And instead the straight lines are there in front of me when I wake, not parallel but never meeting, gathering up into columns and marching, buttressed and invading. Straight lines marching angled to the ground, across the flat perspective towards me, scale: inch to yard. And up now, up they go, up the slope of the gable, the forehead, marching to the apex, lines jagged now, forcing the rupture, the joints jolting, rivets loosening, skull collapsing in on brain

In practice, a mechanical part is exposed to a complex, often random sequence of loads, large and small. Eventually a crack will reach a critical size, the crack will propagate suddenly, and the structure will fracture

I move each day, aiming for the north country expanse outside the city, but I have to avoid tunnels and bridges and I can only walk down wide streets. I traipse the labyrinth I have built around myself. I never find the city's edge, each day the city grows and the more I walk the closer I get to the centre, where the buildings get taller and taller and huddle round me tighter

Graceful degradation: design so that there is no single point of failure, so that when any one part completely fails it does not lead to catastrophic failure of the entire system

But when I get to the country, finally when I get there, I will walk till I come to a huge tree trunk and rest against it. I'll feel its roots buried deep, getting deeper every year, growing ever stronger against the wind. I'll rest finally, leaning my head back against the bark of the tree. The night will be clear yet the sky is empty. The city is far away, as is the roar of the noise, the noise wrought from deeper than magma, as the neck of the tower sways and hovers and falls into its shoulders, folds into its torso, razes to a roar of rubble round its great boots. And when I get there, leaning my head back against the ancient bark of the tree, I see the empty sky where all the stars have long fallen, and my mind is empty too

As a profession with the power to alter people's cities and neighborhoods - and indeed therefore their lives - architecture is often a controversial business to be involved in; many members of the public have learned to be suspicious of any plans for development in places they care about, often turning architecture into a villain to be fought. One proposed solution to this conundrum is to include public participation as much as possible, but many architects are skeptical of such an approach. At a time when the responsibilities of architects are being eroded by engineers and project managers, what would be left to architects if the public is allowed control over the design? Seeking to understand this challenge, in this interview kindly reprinted here with the kind permission of MONU Magazine on "Participatory Urbanism," Bernd Upmeyer speaks to Jeremy Till, a British Architect, writer and educator who has written extensively about the need to for architects to relinquish control and involve local communities in their design process.

Architecture and Participation

Bernd Upmeyer: In 2005, you were one of the editors and contributors to the book "Architecture and Participation" that brought together, according to the summary, leading international practitioners and theorists, ranging from the 1960s pioneers of participation to some of the major contemporary figures in the field. Could you tell us a bit about these early beginnings?

DISTRIBUTING POWER:

Jeremy Till on the Complex Necessity of Participatory Urbanism

Jeremy Till: The pieces that I found interesting about the history of participation were from people such as Giancarlo De Carlo. De Carlo and others were using participation as a way to deconstruct what it means to be an architect or to be a designer. I find this aspect of participation interesting because it questions a lot of the premises on which architecture as a profession is founded - the premises of the individual author-hero, the premises of control, and the premise of expertise and so on. Participation undeniably challenges and upsets some of those standard conventions.

BU: The 1960s were probably the years when participatory processes were first introduced, on a more substantial scale, into planning and design processes.

JT: Yes, this is when a lot of people, including John Habraken and Giancarlo De Carlo, tried out new things. The 1960s to 1980s were the golden years of participation and of revolutionary ideas in general. Some of the most interesting participatory projects were reserving up to 20% of public budgets to be decided by public vote, so-called participatory budgets. In certain cities in Brazil, such as Porto Alegre, a participatory budget is part of their city processes. A serious proportion of the city's budget is determined by open participative techniques, which include open meetings, for example. That is very interesting.

BU: What kind of new spatial conditions and new types of urban and architectural practices can appear when users are included in design processes?

JT: I think what appears in general is a stronger sense of the collective and a sense for shared and communal spaces, and spaces that are not pre-programmed. Again, this is different to standard architectural practice, which generally tries to control

everything. I am making a huge generalization, but in participative practices one does move into new forms of the commons and shared spaces, because in good participative processes, inhabitation and use becomes much more important than in the standard architectural practice.

The Negotiation of Hope

BU: In your article "The Negotiation of Hope" that is part of the book "Architecture and Participation" you state that participation challenges established values and brings an awakening of the virtues of engagement, an awakening that might come as a shock to architects more used to a deluded detachment, but an awakening that is necessary if architecture is to have any future relevance. Why do you think participation is that relevant?

JT: I've really said that? That is quite provocative. I don't think participation is the sole agency in that awakening. I wrote "The Negotiation of Hope" before "Architecture Depends," where I argue that architects have to face their political and social responsibility, and that participation should be involved in the construction of that social responsibility. If architecture is going to become a truly collaborative, a truly social discipline, then participation, in the true sense of the word, has to be part of that whole new discipline.

Other things we have to do as well, but the whole process of negotiation, the whole process of conversation, the whole process of communication is an important aspect in discovering a kind of social intent for architecture.

BU: Nevertheless, in your article you compare participation to the Olympic platitude that taking part is as important as winning, platitudes that are normally exhaled through the gritted teeth of the disappointed athlete. What is so disappointing about participating?

JT: What I talk about in the article is the way that participation can become a politically required token of democratic involvement. Many times it is a kind of fake participation, where architects, planners, or designers pretend to involve people. Here, participation just becomes a necessary part of a political process but it doesn't actually engage the participants in any meaningful way. Participation can be used in a way by architects and planners to fulfill obligations but not actually reinvent or refresh the way of thinking about a project.

BU: Do you think that can be avoided somehow?

JT: Yes, but only if you commit, only if you take it seriously. And to do that, you have to relinquish control. I think this is one of the most difficult things for professions to do. I am not talking only about architecture, but all professions. Any profession is established on the basis of the expertise and the expertise is used as a form of control. In participation, you have to relinquish that control and become a different kind of professional. You have to acknowledge that your expertise is as good as the expertise of others, but different.

BU: But if architects and planners give away their power and

start sharing and relinquishing their knowledge with and to the citizen, what will be left for them? According to Koolhaas, architecture has become already a domain over which architects have lost all control, a zone surrendered to other professions. Today, construction companies are trying increasingly to avoid working with architects by employing their own experts in their companies. So, if the architect somehow loses control in maybe the last thing that he has, namely his drawings, his technical skills, his expertise, what will be left for him? What will be his position?

JT: You put it well, because the whole area of control of architects has been more and more limited to an extent that what is left are the images of architecture, the only way by which architects can claim a little bit of the world. But by focusing on images, I would argue, you are becoming even more distant from the actual processes of architecture and its social aspects. But if we want to redefine architecture as a means of re-imagining the future - social and spatial futures - then I would say that we need to change the way architecture engages with its means of production beyond the image. We need to do this in a collaborative and shared way. Then there is still hope for architects, because they can still bring a special knowledge to the table, which other people don't have. I absolutely believe that architects have a social form of knowledge, a spatial knowledge which they learned and which they developed through their education and through their practice. It is an incredible skill when exercised in an empowering way and using new forms of social constructions.

BU: Is this what you mean when you speak of the necessity of "transformative participation"? Does this happen when the architect becomes a bit more like a citizen, while the citizen becomes more like an expert so both can work together better?

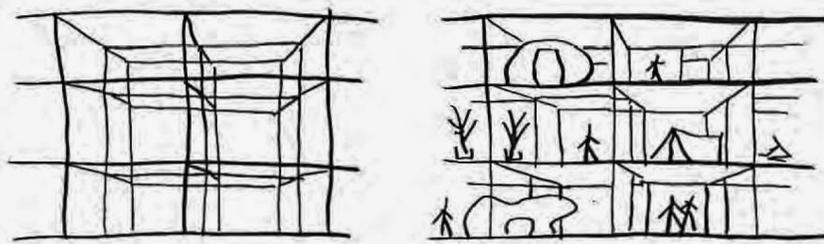
JT: By talking about the citizen expert, or the expert citizen, I mean not so much that all people might become experts, but that the "experts" acknowledge the knowledge of the people and acknowledge that the people's knowledge is as valid and relevant as the knowledge of the architectural expert. The knowledge of the people is just constructed in a different language. So, the means of communication needs to be adapted so that all kinds of knowledge can be brought to the table.

BU: In your article "The Negotiation of Hope" you also say that participation is widely and uncritically accepted as a better way of doing things, especially in planning, but not so much in the field of architecture. Where do you see the difference of urban planning and architecture when it comes to participation?

JT: I think scale makes a difference. Planning, partly because of its democratic political demands and because planning the city always involves social processes, should involve others. However, particularly with our current government in the UK, planning processes don't necessarily involve citizen participation.

BU: You further mention that participation as an unchallenged generic and overused term disguises the fact that in all participatory processes there are degrees of involvement ranging from token participation to full control of the process by citizen participants. And that full participation is an ideal, but an impossible one to achieve in architecture. Could you elaborate on that a bit?

JT: I think what I meant was that planning processes and architectural design processes are always processes that involve power, and you can never avoid this or completely dissolve the



John Habraken: Figure 1: Structure is rigid; Figure 2: Envelopes within the structure are mobile

structures of power. The architect comes with a certain form of knowledge, and knowledge is power. So even if you start with the best intentions, there are always certain power issues that occur during participative processes and this leads to the fact that full participation can never be achieved. But when you acknowledge these power structures and deal with them responsibly, then at least participative processes can achieve some sense of honesty, rather than a kind of falseness.

Limits of Participation

BU: Where do you see the limits of participatory processes?

JT: When thinking about the limits of participation, I often refer to what Gillian Rose once said about community architecture: "the architect is demoted; the people do not accede to power." I think this is a fantastic quote. What she is saying is that if you take it too far, the architect is required to divest everything, including his knowledge (because knowledge is power, and power is untrammelled and therefore bad). And so, in the worst forms of community architecture, all architects are allowed to do is to push pencils (or now, the mouse) around on behalf of the citizens. But if the architects have lost the ability to deploy knowledge, nobody benefits and everyone loses. I think it is fine that architects bring a certain form of knowledge to the table, but only if they are prepared to receive knowledge back from the other side of the table.

BU: How I understand the quote is that the architect gives away his power, but the people do not take the power.

JT: It is not that the people don't take the power, but that the people don't benefit from the architect's knowledge. This puts them in a very weak position and everyone loses.

BU: Don't you think that people might also sometimes not be interested in taking power and actually participating? This might also be a problem.

JT: The real problem of participation is a social one and that generally only a certain percentage participates, generally people who have interests. You can never reach out to an entire community. But that's not an excuse for not doing and trying it.

BU: Typically, people that have more time available are more willing to participate in things.

JT: Yes, exactly. The worst thing is to try to see participation as a form of consensus. Markus Miessen claims quite loudly in his books that participation, as a form of consensus, is exactly the wrong thing to do. You have to accept that participation is a process of confrontation, and that the richest results are found in the processes of antagonism.

BU: Bringing more people at the table certainly does not make things easier. There are usually so many people involved already,



Assembly of the 'Wiki House' in London. Image © Margaux Carron

even without participation. Things can easily get incredibly difficult.

JT: Yes! And also because so many buildings these days are actually simply financial practices, there is incredibly little interest from most developers or clients to engage more people, because it will all compromise the financial efficiency of their projects. In the end, processes of spatial production are controlled by the developer and by the project manager, and not by the user.

BU: How do you see that continuing? Obviously, not all participatory architectural and urban projects can truly cultivate real democracy, increase civic consciousness, and boost transparency, accountability, and efficiency. Do you think the situation will get even worse or that things will change in favor of more participation?

JT: Well, there are some people, such as Paul Mason, who are arguing that the structure of capitalism is being challenged because of new forms of communication.[6] We have to be ready for new structures and formations. There are, for example, some emerging offices such as "Architecture 00" that are doing fantastic things using collaborative participative processes to create new forms of space.

BU: And what they do works well? Do you have the impression it is successful?

JT: Oh yes, amazingly. They've just done, for example, a new building in London. That came out of a participatory process. They have also developed the "Wiki House", an open source, design system, using CNC cutting to make small projects which is de facto participatory because it involves an open access, collaborative process of design.

BU: As happened with "sustainable design", participation in architecture and urban design is in danger, typically when young emerging office are involved, of being misused as a branding strategy and compromised, ruled and co-opted by the interests of communities, local governments, organisations, neo-liberal parties, etc. Do you see that happen with the projects of

Architecture 00 and in the UK in general?

JT: They have their success and exploit that and they get their work, because they are experts in this field, but I think completely without cynicism. They work very carefully and everything is shot through with intellect and integrity.

BU: The weekly news magazine "The Economist," for example, stated in one of its most recent issues entitled "Space and the city" that in order to provide more housing and especially more affordable housing in cities, policymakers should ensure that planning decisions are made from the top down. Because when decisions are taken at the local level, land-use rules tend to be stricter, ultimately limiting the growth of cities and the supply of new living spaces. Do you agree with that?

JT: The Economist is a neo-liberal mouthpiece, and as such against anything that could stop the work of contractors and developers in the name of financial efficiency. But if you look at some Dutch forms of participation or some of the German systems, then you see participatory processes that involve people in a much more integrative manner. In particular, if you take a look at the Dutch participative building movement and the achievements of people such as N. John Habraken. Dutch "open buildings", which are based on Habraken's writings, don't get people together in a classic participative manner but engage new forms of spatial production involving collaborative techniques.

BU: If you would have to give an outlook on the future of participatory urbanism, what would you say?

JT: If I am having a good day, feeling optimistic and thinking about a less neo-liberal world, then I can propose different forms of social contracts, different forms of economic systems. Then I can imagine new forms of the commons and new processes of collaboration and participation. Then I can imagine a new collective and social future. Either capitalism is going to reinvent itself, as Marx says it always does, or else we need to seize the moment to direct it down a more socially and environmentally productive path.

EASINGTON THOUGHTS

Brenda Heslop

Brick by brick
Stone by stone
They're building walls
And call it home
Brick by brick
They shut us out
They're building mansions
And we don't count

Stone by stone
Brick by brick
We used to belong here
And work in the pit
They pulled down the houses
And buried the bones
Brick by brick
And home by home

Brenda and Geoff Heslop of the band Ribbon Road are currently working as Artists in Residence in Durham University Geography Department, looking at social housing issues in the Numbered Streets - ex-colliery houses in Horden, Co. Durham. This follows their last project - 'No Redemption Songs' about the Miner's Strike in nearby Easington Colliery.

When the pit closed in 1986, the houses were passed on to a housing association who, despite many promises over the years, have not seen fit to invest in keeping the properties in a good state of repair. Most of the houses are now empty, many of them vandalised - plumbing and electrics stolen. The few owner-occupiers are surrounded by empty houses and many social problems. The housing association are now selling off the properties at auction, with no interest in who it is that buys them.

In this ex-mining area it is easy to see the results of a lack of investment in social housing stock coupled with government policy that has affected social housing over a number of years.

Ribbon Road are producing a song and film piece, provisionally titled 'Our Streets Are Numbered' opening at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, 2016.

Further details at www.ribbonroadmusic.com

Image © Carl Joyce

REFLECTING ON THE POLITICS OF HOUSING REGENERATION IN GATESHEAD

Emma Ormerod

In this article PhD researcher Emma Ormerod discusses her research into a Housing Market Renewal project in Gateshead which left whole swathes of the neighbourhood empty for many years, awaiting development. She also discusses partnership working in housing which brings together the public, private and third sectors and the tensions inherent within this.

Whilst the over heated housing market in the South East presents a crisis of affordability and a housing shortage, the housing market in parts of the North East have been framed as having failed for not keeping up with this market pace, and suffering from post-industrial neighbourhood decline.

In 2002 the New Labour Government introduced the Housing Market Renewal (HMR) initiative, which identified local areas across the North and West Midlands of England that were deemed to be suffering from protracted 'housing market failure', and recommended 'radical and sustained action to replace obsolete housing with modern sustainable accommodation, through demolition and new building or refurbishment' (ODPM, 2003:24). NewcastleGateshead became one of nine pathfinder areas within which specific neighbourhoods were the focus of such regeneration.

In 2007 I moved back to Gateshead from Leeds where I had trained and worked as a town planner for five years, and I took up a position at Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council. It was at this time that Gateshead Council were beginning the process of demolishing 440 Victorian terraced houses and Tyneside flats, and refurbishing others under HMR in the neighbourhood of Bensham and Saltwell (about a ten minute walk from where I live). I began to question why we were demolishing the houses in this community, and in 2013 I began some research for a PhD at Durham University, asking how can the housing market in a neighbourhood fail? Why is it necessary to demolish these houses? What will be built in their place? How do people feel about this?

A Failing Housing Market?

I began by reviewing the 'evidence base' for HMR; the series of reports and assessments produced by various consultants on behalf of Gateshead Council which sought to analyse the housing market. In short, the housing market had not failed and in fact, house prices were rising in this neighbourhood at the time. However, the housing market was problematised in a number of ways. Planning consultants Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners (NLP) analysed the market through looking at a number of self-selected variables and certain streets were identified as having 'vulnerable' or potentially 'weak' housing markets if they had high levels of private rented properties, higher than average vacancy rates, lower (albeit rising) house prices and concentrations of multiple deprivation. The streets with vulnerable housing markets correlated with those that were identified as being in 'poor condition' according to a rapid visual assessment of houses, carried out by property agents GVA Grimley (2006b). This external assessment categorised the 'general impression' of the streets, which was said to 'underpin market perceptions' (GVA Grimley, 2006a: 19). Crucially there was no internal or structural inspection of the houses and yet from this superficial assessment the local narrative became that the housing was in 'poor condition', 'structurally unsound' and 'beyond repair'. Houses in visually poor streets were then said to 'act as a deterrent to market-led investment' (GVA Grimley, 2006b: 20), requiring intervention. Both the NLP housing market analysis and

the GVA Grimley visual assessment informed the final Executive Summary of the Neighbourhood Action Plan which described the housing market as 'failing' for the first time (GVA Grimley, 2006a:3).

Reconstructing the Housing Market through Partnership

Funding for HMR was withdrawn prematurely when the Coalition Government came to power in 2010, at which time Gateshead were mid-way through their demolition programme. The Council decided to continue the regeneration through a joint venture partnership, and following a competitive bidding process a partnership with construction group Galliford Try and housing association Home Group was formalised in March 2012. The partnership formed a separate organisation called Gateshead Regeneration Partnership (GRP), a Limited Liability Partnership in which the Council provide the land for development, Galliford Try build the houses (under their house building arm Linden Homes) and Home Group provide funding and manage any social housing that is provided. The partnership is bound by a business plan and a series of legal agreements, none of which are publicly available because they are said to be commercially sensitive. Whilst this confidentiality is not unusual in commercial house building, the role of the Council in the partnership raises questions about transparency and accountability in the disposal of public land and house building. Furthermore, the land that the Council are providing goes beyond the HMR sites and includes nineteen publicly owned sites of varying types (greenfield and brownfield) across the borough. This is a long-term partnership expected to build 2,400 homes over 15-20 years.

Through the partnership, the Council are now reconstructing the housing market in Bensham and Saltwell, providing more 'aspirational family houses' which will attract new residents. However, considering the scale of the partnership beyond this neighbourhood, I am interested in understanding what this means for the future of housing development in Gateshead, as the Council becomes a market actor with a large portfolio of publicly owned land across the borough, and the flexibility to add more. I am told by Council respondents that the partnership are seeking to create a different housing market; a sustainable market in which they can raise the bar for house builders across the borough and provide energy efficient, high quality housing above and beyond that which the market would have provided. But does entering the housing market change the role of local government? What is at stake in this new role?

Whilst public-private partnerships are not new, the way in which housing is being delivered through this joint venture partnership (driven by the Council) is, and it appears to be changing the shape of local government in a number of ways. Firstly, the partnership is challenging the traditional role of the local authority, with distinctions having to be made between the economic growth function of the partnership, and more traditional and statutory functions such as planning, when in reality such distinctions are not always that clear. That local economic development has become the driver of housing delivery is seen by some within the



Council to come at the expense of more socially orientated roles, particularly community engagement and participation. The GRP, like all private developers, are not engaging with local communities other than through the formal planning consultation procedures. Interestingly, promotional activity of the developer is understood as form of community engagement, which perhaps reveals a subtle change in how the Council (in partnership) interacts with residents.

Secondly, the housing development sites are marketed under the Linden Homes brand, and there is no public face of the GRP and residents believe this is a purely private development. I have been told by the GRP that this to prevent confusion, but importantly that there is a stigma attached to Council housing that might compromise the value of the new housing if it were marketed as a Council regeneration scheme. So whilst the Council have a lead role within the partnership, the nature of this role is not revealed to the public, in order to protect their new market actor position. This raises some important questions about transparency; particularly under the rationale of not wanting to 'confuse' the public. There is a definite sense that the public do not understand how development works, and that the ultimate goal of regeneration (understood largely through house prices) is being protected. Why does a public body, developing public land need to avoid transparency? In whose interest are the GRP acting by not revealing the Council's role?

Finally, there are questions to be asked about the role of local politics in the partnership. Whilst the GRP in many ways act like a private developer, the Council have a responsibility to keep local politicians informed, which is seen to be a challenge for the GRP. This reveals how local politics are understood as an obstacle to be overcome in the partnership, rather than a

democratic process. Whilst the local councillors I have spoken to (who also live in Bensham and Saltwell) have an alternative view of the housing market and ideologically resist the drive for home ownership and increasing house prices, political support is given to the development overall because it is the Council who are taking a pro-active lead to regenerate the neighbourhood, and concerns over affordability give way to the narrative of energy efficient and sustainable housing. There appears to be no political debate or critical consideration of the partnership.

Whilst the pro-active role of the Council in housing regeneration can have some benefits, such as local control and the ability to raise finance for regeneration (and possibly other services in the future under austerity), through examining housing regeneration in this neighbourhood we can see what could also be at stake when local authorities become market actors: transparency, public engagement and political debate. This ultimately raises the question: is this form of partnership in the public interest?

GVA Grimley (2006a) *Gateshead Council Bensham and Saltwell Executive Summary*, February, 2006

GVA Grimley, (2006b) *Gateshead Council Urban Design, Heritage and Character Analysis Report, Bensham and Saltwell*, January, 2006

Nathaniels, Litchfield & Partners (undated) *Bensham and Saltwell Neighbourhood Housing Analysis*

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2003) *Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future*, HMSO, London

Emma Ormerod is a PhD researcher in the Department of Geography at Durham University with an interest in housing, regeneration, planning, local government and politics. Prior to beginning her research, Emma had worked as a Town Planner for over ten years in various public and non-public organisations.

The UK is experiencing yet another housing crisis. New housing supply is at its lowest level for 90 years (excluding the World War II period), while average house prices and rents are rising much faster than wages and incomes, making housing unaffordable for growing numbers of people. Rising evictions and harshening conditions in the lower end of the private rental sector are evoking media comparisons with urban slums. While today's UK housing crisis can be partly blamed on reckless government policies since 2010, it really begins in the global economic crisis of the 1970s, which opened the door to neoliberalism on a planetary scale.

Under neoliberalism, governments of the so-called left and right have rolled back citizens' protections from market forces to both source new outlets for accumulation and undermine labour conditions and social struggle. This process has been spear-headed by the privatisation of key industries and public services under what Harvey has called 'accumulation by dispossession'¹. Urban dispossession goes to the heart of the UK housing story under neoliberalism. Unbridled capitalism's destructive failure to provide decent and affordable housing for the industrial working class impelled state intervention. Private landowners' right to extract monopoly rents was tempered by the partial decommodification of shelter in the form of mass public housebuilding. But in imposing limits on speculative capital, post-war state intervention also built up a potentially valuable stock of public housing and land to be re-included in the market on highly profitable terms.

rise in public debt as an opportunity to complete the unfinished neoliberal revolution started over three decades ago.³

Since 2010, the ruling Conservative Party has subjected the housing-welfare system, primarily in England and Wales, to a cavalcade of creative destruction: radical cuts to housing benefit; the end of government financial support for building new social rented housing; the abolition of statutory lifetime tenancies for council tenants; and the massive increase in Right to Buy discounts now extended to housing association tenants. The 2015-16 Housing and Planning Bill currently before Parliament takes this assault one step further by forcing English local authorities to sell their most valuable empty council homes, compelling all social landlords to charge market or near market rents to tenants with incomes of over £40,000 in London and £30,000 elsewhere, and redirecting all existing subsidies for sub-market renting and shared ownership towards building 'affordable' Starter Homes – set at £450,000 in London and £250,000 elsewhere – for first-time buyers earning £100,000 a year with the right to a taxpayer-funded 20% discount.

Faced with growing housing shortages and cuts to local government higher than almost any other public department, many urban authorities – particularly in London – are now actively seeking to sell off existing housing and land assets for private residential and retail re-development.

THE UK HOUSING CRISIS UNDER AUSTERITY URBANISM: *Fight Enclosure with Commons*

Stuart Hodkinson

Hence why privatisation has spearheaded the neoliberal attack on housing, opening up these precious stocks of decommodified housing to new private owners, whether former tenants through Right to Buy discounts or so-called 'charitable' social landlords or for-profit companies. Privatisation has also enabled finance capital to gain more profitable access to the land rents previously locked up within the old collectivist model of housing finance. Essential to this *financialisation* of housing has been the political promotion and financial lubrication of home ownership that has been a central feature of UK housing policy since 1979.

These policies contributed to the uncontrolled international speculation in national housing markets that detonated the 2008 global financial crisis. However, rather than representing a turning point against neoliberalism, the post-2008 world has witnessed its intensification. Cities have been particularly hit by what Peck has called 'austerity urbanism' with governments shifting the social costs of 'macroeconomic mismanagement, financial speculation, and corporate profiteering... onto the dispossessed, the disenfranchised, and the disempowered' through large budget cuts to the local urban, public, neighbourhood and household scales.¹

While austerity has been structurally imposed in Eurozone countries like Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain by the terms of European Union bailouts, states in relatively less affected countries, like the UK, have used the 2008 crisis and its associated

This intensification of housing and land privatisation alongside welfare state retrenchment is producing greater precariousness of work, income and shelter, whilst boosting private landlord power to choose tenants and evict at will. The result is the ongoing commodification of public space and the creation of new, exclusive urban spaces of elite consumption in which those surplus populations with insufficient market value – either as workers or consumers – are to be, in the words of Saskia Sassen, expelled by stealth or force.⁴

These acts of urban dispossession under neoliberalisation are part of a broader process I have called elsewhere the *new urban enclosures*⁵. Enclosure links the historical acts of rural dispossession and the expropriation of common land and rights that paved the way for the birth of the capitalist city to today's housing crisis. Enclosure abounds in the 'privatisation' of urban spaces and services formerly publicly owned, and in the 'fencing off' of the city itself through the countless residential, office and retail developments that actively 'displace' and 'exclude' the urban poor from the city.

If we can understand the UK housing crisis as a part of a new enclosure movement, then in terms of resistance and the creation of alternatives, what of the commons? The term conjures multiple meanings, but I understand it, following De Angelis, as meaning the collective production of social and economic life spaces that provide various degrees of protection from capitalist markets. Commons are not just things or spaces, but composed of alternative social relations in which people produce to

share what they produce. By placing the housing crisis within this wider framework of enclosure and commoning, I sketch out three coordinates that might guide our political activism around housing both now and in the future.

#1. Living-in-common: this means acting prefiguratively, by trying to meet our housing needs and desires through the creation of directly democratic, egalitarian and collective forms of housing in the everyday. These principles find real expression in Colin Ward's notion of 'dweller control'⁶ through the practice of 'mutual aid' and the creation of housing coops and other forms of collectively-owned and managed housing.

#2. Defending-the-actually-existing-commons: this means acting strategically, by defending all existing forms of housing commons regardless of tenure and imperfection. While a key priority is to defend all existing public and social housing, all forms of housing and tenure contain residues of commons at risk of enclosure and thus represent important sources of resistance to enclosure. For example, it means defending the individual homeowner at threat of mortgage repossession or compulsory purchase to make way for a new housing or commercial development.

#3. Growing-the-housing-commonwealth: this means producing new housing commons at the apex of resistance and creation. In the very moment of struggle to defend the existing housing commons, we must transform it along the principles of living-in-common without weakening the protective shield it provides; similarly, in the very moment of creating cooperative forms of housing, we should ensure these new spaces actively support existing housing campaigns against enclosure and accumulation.

This politics of housing commons can be illustrated by two examples.

The first is the famous case of tenant takeover on the central London council housing estates of Walthamston and Elgin during the early 1990s. Back in 1985, these tenants learned that their landlord – Westminster City Council – intended to sell their homes to private developers for the purpose of gentrification-based redevelopment. Tenants initially responded by campaigning against the sell-off, but shifted tactics in 1988 by using the government's very own privatisation legislation to transfer ownership of the estates to the community, and pre-empt the sell-off to private developers. In April 1992 the tenants took over ownership and control of 921 homes under a resident-controlled housing association⁷.

The second example is the work of the Detroit People's Platform in the United States. In October 2015, activists raised an astonishing \$100,000 in just 10 days through an international public crowdfund appeal and purchased 14 of 8,000 occupied Detroit homes being auctioned off and secured them permanently in a Community Land Trust (CLT) so families could stay in their homes that would now become permanently off the marketplace and out of the hands of speculators⁸. The plan is to now grow the financial power of the CLT so that more homes can be reclaimed and the accompanying land used to grow food and create a circular economy based on commons.

Here we see tantalising glimpses of how housing commons can be (re)produced through different forms of commoning. The task now is to transform these singular, one-off circulations of housing commons into a self-proliferating, self-strengthening and

diversifying process⁹. This requires the creation of a 'common housing movement' that brings together public tenants, home owners, private renters, squatters and the homeless around a political agenda to take all housing out of private property relations and into a form of 'commonhold' that would provide affordable, secure, collectively-controlled housing for all.¹⁰

¹ Peck, J. (2015), *Austerity Urbanism: The Neoliberal Crisis of American Cities*. New York: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, http://www.rosalux-nyc.org/wp-content/files_mf/peck_austerity_urbanism_eng.pdf, 6, 7

² Hodkinson, S. and Robbins, G. (2013), 'The Return of Class War Conservatism? Housing under the UK Coalition Government', *Critical Social Policy* 33(1): 57-77, http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/74333/2/Hodkinson-Robbins_CSP_2013.pdf

³ Bradley, Q. (2015), 'The Housing Crisis Weaponised', *Independent Labour Publications*, <http://www.independentlabour.org.uk/main/2016/03/23/the-housing-crisis-weaponised/>

⁴ Sassen, S. (2014), *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy*. Harvard University Press

⁵ Hodkinson, S. (2012), 'The New Urban Enclosures', *City: analysis of urban trends, culture, theory, policy, action*, 16(5): 500-518, <http://www.fooddeserts.org/images/paper0010.pdf>

⁶ Ward, C. (1974) *Tenants take over*. London: The Architectural Press Ltd

⁷ Walthamston and Elgin Community Homes Limited (1997 / 2006), *Against the Odds: Walthamston and Elgin from Campaign to Control*, <http://www.wech.co.uk/images/pdf/Against-The-Odds.pdf>

⁸ <http://detroit.curbed.com/2015/10/21/9908862/keepour-homesdetroit-unitedcommunityhousingcoalition>

⁹ Dyer-Witheford, N. (2010) 'Commonism', in *Turbulence Collective* (eds.) *What would it mean to win?* Oakland, CA: PM Press, 110

¹⁰ See Hodkinson, S. (2012), 'The Return of the Housing Question', *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization*, 12(4):423-444

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USEFUL LINKS

SELF-BUILD HOUSING

The Segal Self-Build Trust
 NACSBA: National Custom and Self-Build Association
 Community Self-Build Agency
 The Glasshouse Community-Led Design

www.segalsselfbuild.co.uk
www.nacsba.org.uk
www.communityselfbuildagency.org.uk
www.theglasshouse.org.uk

HOMELESSNESS

Crisis
 Shelter
 The Big Issue Foundation
 Centrepoint
 Youth Homelessness North East
 Homeless Link

www.crisis.org.uk
www.shelter.org.uk
www.bigissue.org.uk
www.centrepoint.org.uk
www.youthhomelessnortheast.org.uk
www.homeless.org.uk

SELF-HELP HOUSING

Self-Help Housing website
 Community Campus 87
 Canopy Housing Project
 LATCH
 Giroscope

www.self-help-housing.org
www.communitycampus87.com
www.canopyhousing.org
www.latch.org.uk
www.giroscope.org.uk

OTHER FORMS OF HOUSING

Community Land Trust Network
 UK Co-housing Network
 Confederation of Co-operative Housing

www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk
www.cohousing.org.uk
www.cch.coop

HOUSING AND LAND ACTIVISM

Radical Housing Network
 Greater Manchester Housing Action
 Land Research Action Network
 Who Owns Scotland
 The Land Is Ours
 SHOUT – The Campaign for Social Housing
 UK Uncut
 The People's Assembly
 Generation Rent UK
 Priced Out – Campaign for affordable housing
 Community Land Advisory Service

www.radicalhousingnetwork.org
www.facebook.com/1mcrcsalfordhousingaction
www.landaction.org
www.whoownsscotland.org.uk
www.tlio.org.uk
www.4socialhousing.co.uk
www.ukuncut.org.uk
www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk
www.generationrent.org
www.pricedout.org.uk
www.communitylandadvice.org.uk

INTERESTING PROJECTS AND FRIENDS

xsite architecture
 Tilt Artistic Services
 Wunderbar
 Urbanistas
 The NewBridge Project
 Granby 4 Streets
 Association urbaMonde
 The Heidelberg Project, Detroit
 The Northern Correspondent
 Co-PLAN Institute for Habitat Development, Albania
 Centre for Social Justice and Community Action
 POLIS University, Albania
 Building Trust International
 Architecture for Humanity
 UN Habitat
 Northern Architecture

www.xsitearchitecture.co.uk
www.facebook.com/Tilt-Newcastle-1236172276397135
www.wunderbar.org.uk
www.urbanistasuk.wordpress.com
www.thenewbridgeproject.com
www.granby4streetscft.co.uk
www.urbamonde.org
www.heidelberg.org
www.northern correspondent.com
www.co-plan.org
www.dur.ac.uk/beacon/socialjustice
www.universitetipolis.edu.al
www.buildingtrustinternational.org
www.habitatforhumanity.org.uk
www.unhabitat.org
www.northernarchitecture.com

PROTOHOME is a self-build housing project created by members of Crisis, the national charity for single homeless people, temporarily sited and open to the public in the Ouseburn, Newcastle upon Tyne.

A group of individuals who have experienced homelessness have developed a timber-frame self-build housing prototype using a method of building specifically designed for untrained self-builders. The aim isn't to create a full housing model with services, but a 'shell' structure that offers a vision of how this model could be developed into 'working' housing in the future.

PROTOHOME is open to the public to visit and plays host to a programme of events including talks, exhibitions, public forums, film screenings, artist residencies, performances, workshops and more, examining the collaborative design/build process and wider issues concerning housing and homelessness in an austerity context, participatory alternatives and the politics of land and development.

See the website for more information, opening times and full details of the programme of events:
www.protohome.co.uk // www.facebook.com/protohome.newcastle // info@protohome.co.uk

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