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# Housing and the Realignment of Social and Spatial Contracts

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landscapes: What are the consequences for housing?*

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# The housing crisis



Raises the obvious question:

How sad is John Flint that he is in a toy shop with his son during his family summer holiday and his first thought is to capture an image that epitomises the housing crisis in a neo-liberal global system?



# The controversy of housing and urban restructuring programmes

*“Nothing- no programme- did more to destroy homes and communities in this country than the Luftwaffe in the Second World War, but the housing market renewal programme did more housing destruction and community destruction than there has been at any time since the war.”*

*[Some descriptions of HMR] “were so distant from the reality on the ground...as to be a grotesque bending of the truth.”*

Grant Shapps, Minister for Housing, UK Government, 22 April 2012 (see Bury, 2012)

# International coalescence and alignment

- International coalescence and alignment within housing, planning and urban policy in western neo-liberal societies in the last twenty years
- Uniformity of the diagnosis of urban housing problems and the commonality of rationalities and techniques deployed to address them
- Low demand, poor stock condition and 'shrinking cities'
- Physical and economic 'obsolescence'
- Crisis of the social purposes and outcomes of public housing
- 'Neighbourhood effects'

# 'Sites to be razed': the imaginary of public housing



- Re-presenting public housing in the imagination (Mann, 2012).
- *“Seen from 40 floors up in a luxury tower across town, Cabrini-Green’s apartment slabs brood like tombstones on quarantined turf”* (quoted in Mann, 2012, 282).
- In 1952 Congress required public housing tenants to sign loyalty oaths certifying that they were not members of subversive organisations.
- Concealment and containment: Hurricane Katrina eroded the distinction between the private ghetto and the public arena (Rhodes, 2010).

# Rationalities and techniques

- Mixed communities, reconnected housing markets and neighbourhood renewal
- Techniques of renovation, demolition, new build and tenure and population reconfigurations through mechanisms and consequences often defined as state-sponsored gentrification
- A reinvigorated belief in the power of state planning to (re)imagine and shape cities (Judt, 2010):
- *Housing Market Renewal* (England), *Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere/ Moving to Opportunity* (United States), *Stedelijk Herstructureing* (urban restructuring)/ *40 Wijkenannpak*-(40 Neighbourhoods)(Netherlands), *Solidarite et Renouvellement* (Solidarity and Urban Renewal) Housing Act (France), the *Stadtumbau Ost* (Urban Restructuring East) (Germany), *National Rental Affordability Scheme* (Australia)
- Widely and extensively implemented outside these national programmes by local urban regimes at state and city levels (Goetz, 2012)

# Back to the future? Edinburgh

- ❑ Edinburgh Improvement Act of 1867.
- ❑ New housing intended for 'superior working classes'.
- ❑ Public subsidies recognised but profitability remained the first consideration of the redevelopment plan.
- ❑ Redevelopment 'marched to the dictates of the market place' and to ensure the best possible return on investment: entirely dependent upon the building industry's willingness to take over cleared sites.
- ❑ The centrality of laissez faire and the reluctance to enlarge the scope of public responsibility: public enterprise should do nothing that private enterprise could do.
- ❑ Representation by elites representing enfranchised households bearing the public costs.
- ❑ Chief beneficiaries were 'rent-racking' landlords.

# Back to the future? London's East End

- ❑ Elite benefitting from slum landlordism.
- ❑ Selling cleared land to private firms but many sites remained unsold and 4,000 evictees awaiting rehousing.
- ❑ London County Council not legally permitted to rebuild housing.

## **Boundary street redevelopment in 1893:**

- ❑ “Taking away poor people’s houses.”
- ❑ Evicted residents ‘ruled out of the new vision for Boundary Street’.
- ❑ One third of evicted residents could not afford new rents: 11 out of 5,719 moved into the new estate.
- ❑ Rapid rent increases of 27 per cent.
- ❑ Strict rules for new tenements and no rent arrears allowed.

Wise (2008)



# City Beautiful?



- Large scale state intervention in the real estate market, including demolition and municipal regulation of design and construction of buildings.
- A civic landscape to **counter corporate capitalism** and the skyscraper as well as violent labour conflict.
- Public investment designed to enhance urban commerce, investment capital, private profits increasing property values, tourism, trade and revitalised local urban economies.
- *“Beauty has always paid better than any other commodity and always will.”* (Daniel Burnham).
- *“Bringing rich people here rather than them go elsewhere to spend their money”* (Daniel Burnham).
- Refusal of free entry for poor children on one dedicated day of the Chicago World Fair.
- Philanthropic housing could not compete with the 20 per cent returns of slum landlordism (Birch and Gardner, 1981).

# Governmentalities

*“It is our part to relieve the Distressed, theirs to amend their lives.”*

An Account of the Proceedings of the Governors of Lock-Hospital, London, 11 December 1749 (quoted in Cruickshank, 2010, p. 302).

*“The causes of apprehension and complaint among populations ultimately lie not within constitutions or governments but in their own conduct”*

(Edmund Burke, 1790, p. 375).



## ‘Changing the narrative’ and cynical ideology

- Acting ‘as if’ and the ‘manufactured ignorance’ of the state (Crawford, 2012; Slater, 2012; Zizek, 1989): *“They know very well how things really are, yet still they are doing it as if they did not know.”*
- The role of governments in urban neoliberalization is “in practice more often about the management of perceptions than the management of the urban macro economy” (Lovering, 2007, p. 3).
- Liberal Party budget in Canada in 1995 which transferred responsibility for social housing to provincial governments: “The very redefinition of government itself.” (Martin, 1995, p. 6)

## Changing the narrative 3

'Private registered providers of social housing' (Home Office, 2012).

*"For too long we have measured our success in tackling poverty in terms of the simplistic concept of income transfer"*

(Iain Duncan Smith, foreword to HM Government, 2012).

*"This government believes that the focus on income over the last decades has ignored the root causes of poverty"*

(HM Government, 2012, p. 4).

## Changing the narrative 3

*“People living in poverty are significantly more vulnerable to getting into problem debt- partly because their low income can make repayments more difficult, but also because their backgrounds may mean they missed out on learning money management skills”*

(HM Government, 2012, p. 57).

*“A once in a lifetime opportunity...to give kids in households a chance not to repeat the pattern of unemployment, lawlessness and failure of their parents and often grandparents”*

(Louise Casey, 28 March, 2012).

# Secession from responsibility?

- The importance of 'building resilience' and 'character' (Riots, Communities and Victims Panel, 2012).
- 'Fairness' in housing and welfare systems (HM Government, 2011; HM Government, 2012; Scottish Government, 2012; Cameron, 2012)
- Secession from responsibility? (Boudreau and Keil, 2001)
- Social attitudes on housing in England 2010- 28 % support new local homes, 19% support new social housing by councils/ housing associations and 5% think housing is the priority for government expenditure (Taylor, 2011)

# David Cameron speech on welfare reform, 25 June 2012:

*“Those within [the welfare system] grow up with a series of expectations: you can have a home of your own...”*

*“Why does the single mother get the council housing straightaway when the hard-working couple have been waiting years?”*

*“There are currently 210,000 people aged 16-24 who are social housing tenants...and this is happening when there is a growing phenomenon of young people living with their parents into their 30s because they can't afford their own place- almost 3 million between the ages of 20 and 34. So for literally millions, the passage to independence is several years living in their childhood bedroom as they save up to move out. While, for many others, it's a trip to the council where they can get housing benefit at 18 or 19- even if they are not actively seeking work...there are many who will have a parental home and somewhere to stay- they just want more independence.”*

# The social contract and the nation state (1)

- State's monopolisation of violence, taxation and other elements of social control framed the civilising process in modernity (Elias, 2000), fear of an all-powerful civitas – Leviathan - that regulated self-interest and self-preservation (Hobbes, 1651)
- Humans' capacity for sociality and their pursuit of self-preservation is related to the specific configuration of the state or the particular rule of Leviathan. Hobbes' perpetual war of all against all is postulated as occurring in the absence of a commonwealth (Hobbes, 1651, p.296).
- But, this is not premised upon forms of social solidarity, but rather, individuals unite in commonwealths and place themselves under government in order to preserve their own private property (Locke, 1698) and government actually works through erecting guards and fences to protect this property (Davy, 2012).
- Society has never been constituted on an actual social contract, rather it is 'an associative figuration' which exists and evolves of itself (Rousseau, 1762; Barker, 1960).
- Even if some form of initial contract originated in consent it did, and does, not continue to exist through consent (Hume, 1740).

## The social contract and the nation state (2)

- The first key lesson of sovereignty was that the people were to be taught that they ought not to be in love with any form of government they see in their neighbour nations, more than with their own (Hobbes, 1651; Wickham and Evers, 2012).
- However, even for Hobbes, Leviathan became and remained sovereign through some forms of (imagined) covenants with its subjects (Davy, 2012) and this included the power of the sovereign authority to **protect**, and **provide predictability for**, its subjects.
- The philosophy of the social contract marked the transition from natural law to the idealisation of the nation state (Barker 1960, p.xxxii).
- This implied contract of government, even if it never really existed, shaped human behaviour as if it did (Barker, 1960, p.vii).

# The radical realignment of socio-spatial contracts

- *“This Government’s new contract with the British people on work and welfare”* (HM Government, 2012, p. 36).
- Enhanced conditionality and ‘earned citizenship’ (Flint, 2009).
- Social housing reform: fixed and probationary tenancies, further conditionality (including ASB) and ambiguities over income and eligibility (UK and Scottish Governments).
- ‘Scum villages’ outside Amsterdam- caravans and minimum services (Waterfield, 2012).

# The Irony of Grant Shapps

- Evacuation versus Housing Benefit reform in London.
- Housing always 'wobbly pillar of welfare state' (Malpass, 2003), but Homes for Heroes post 1918 and council housing post 1945?



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# Wicked problems and urban space

- ‘Reimage’ cities : transforming entire public housing stocks and reconfiguring the architectural and demographic reality of these cities (Goetz, 2012).
- ‘Difficult spaces’ and multi-scalar geographies of socio-spatial justice (Soja, 2010; Ferrari, 2012; Pinnegar, 2012).
- Struggles for the ‘soul of the city’ (Judt, 2010).
- The imagining of the ‘just city’ (Harvey, 1973; Fainstein, 2011; Marcuse et al., 2009).
- The ‘right to the city’: the ability to legitimately participate in (access) and appropriate (occupy) urban space (Lefebvre, 1968; Harvey, 2008; Attoh, 2011; Duke, 2009; Connelly, 2011).
- Spatial manifestations of power and conflict (Zukin, 1991).
- Paton’s (2012) concept of differential *elective fixivity* and how different classes retain or develop an ability to control or choose their location.
- ‘Context of transience’ in the ‘illegal cities’ of the global south (Datta, 2012).

# Housing and urban studies and the issues

- What if there is no longer a centralised or centralising authority which social contract thinkers built/build their theories upon?
- Treasure islands and offshore (Shaxson, 2011).
- PFI (Raco, 2012).
- Privatisation of security and intelligence (G4S).
- Merging of social and private rental tenures (including homelessness).
- The City of London (not in the Domesday Book) and the precedent of the 'great refusal.'
- Advanced urban marginality (Wacquant, 2008; and the precariat (Standing, 2011).
- A governmentality of unease (Gilbert, 2009) and a spatial fix for generalised insecurities and complaints (Mann, 2012).



# Re-bordering



- G4S: Ljubljana and Lincolnshire.
- Re-scaling border work (Koshela, 2010).
- Re-bordering immigration to the interior (Gilbert, 2009).



<http://www.blueservo.net/>

# Consequences?

- Japan and the lost generation?
- What are the sociological consequences of a generation having less housing opportunities than their parents?

(McKee, 2012; Pennington et al., 2012; Colic-Peisker and Johnson, 2012).



# Domo-politics

- Domopolitics (Walters, 2004): Governing the nation as the home.
- Reconfiguration of relations between citizen, state and territory and their rationalities and spatialities
- Political economy governs the state as a *household*
- Domopolitics governs the state as a *home*

*But...*

- *Domus* in Rome meant wealthy homes. The majority of the urban population resided in *censula* (flats) in *insula* buildings.



# Alternative urban visions

## 'Hope Seoul' master plan 2014

- Allowing each citizen to enjoy welfare benefits and securing a minimum standard of living.
- To create a city where each citizen can **unabashedly** enjoy a certain level of welfare.
- *"In the future the city will focus on welfare as a basic human right and strive to approach a form of universal welfare by establishing the 'Seoul Standard' for this first time in the country and designating the marginalized as 'Seoul households in poverty' (emphasis added).*
- **Increasing the ratio of public housing**, supporting co-operative housing and supplying housing vouchers to monthly rental housing tenants from low income households.



# Generational conflict in the housing system: Towards a solution?

**and finally...**

A TODDLER has received an apology from a council after being asked to speak at a housing strategy meeting. Oakley Barrett, who is 15 months old, was invited to attend the focus group by Northampton Borough Council. Grandfather Bob Barrett said: 'He can just about say "mama".'

From *The Metro*, October 2012

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