

# **‘Those That Used to Have the Right to Live Here’: Housing, Welfare Reform and the Right to the City**

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# The housing crisis



# 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).
- Public housing as ‘un-American’ and home ownership as a constitutive feature of citizenship ‘in a threatening world’ (Argersinger, 2010)
- In 1952 Congress required public housing tenants to sign loyalty oaths certifying that they were not members of subversive organisations.
- Boston Housing Authority’s rigorous screening of tenants: never established as ‘reformed version of the poorhouse’ with social support (Hunt, 2003)
- 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.



# 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.”*
- London Olympic Legacy host communities to have “same social and economic chances as their neighbours across London” (See Watt, 2013, p. 99).
- Chicago’s contract sales market: all actors knew that lack of access to formal credit markets was a principle cause of the problems of the ‘ghetto’ (see Helgeson, 2011, p. 997).
- 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 2

‘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).

# 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.”*

# 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)
- The housing of the poorest has always 'exercised the limits of urban governance' (Crook, 2008), but it is these limits which are being realigned.



## ‘The Gospel of Public Housing’

*“A government housing subsidy... [is necessary to correct]...  
“the distribution of our national income [that] has not been  
entirely just.”*

Senator Robert Wagner, introducing legislation for a permanent federal housing programme in the United States in 1935 (quoted in Argersinger, 2010, p. 799).

*“A house is a concrete symbol of what a person is worth”*  
Kenneth Clark in *Dark Ghetto* (quoted in McLaughlin, 2011, p. 551).

*“America is a stronger country every single time a family  
moves into a home of their own.”*

George W. Bush, 2004 (quoted in Helgeson, 2011, 993).

# The social contract and the nation state

- 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? (and also WW1 and WW2 workers housing in the United States).



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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).

# Displacement

- The dismal record of social justice in housing (Hunt, 2003)
- Paton's (2012) concept of differential *elective fixivity* and how different classes retain or develop an ability to control or choose their location.
- Residents' defence of their 'right to stay put' and 'right to place' in daily struggles over space in the contemporary city (Watt, 2013)
- Stigmatisation, attrition and compulsion as new techniques of 'winkling' (Crookes, 2013)
- 'Context of transience' in the 'illegal cities' of the global south (Datta, 2012).



# The politics of public housing

- Public housing always linked to another cause- relief employment, economic stimulation and urban redevelopment
- The ‘public housers’ in the US argued that public housing was an **entitlement** programme for the **majority** of the American public (von Hoffman, 2005, p. 244)
- Housing as an issue of **social justice** rather than environmental health and a ‘national disgrace’ in Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty: in response to ‘long hot summers’ and ‘urban convulsions’ (McLaughlin, 2011, p. 541-542).

*“We need to be thinking of the sociology and the psychology of the city...we have to start thinking of the human beings who live in the cities of America and **what it is to live there.**”*

Senator Abraham Ribicoff, 1966 (quoted in McLaughlin, 2011, p. 551).

# Protection and Predictability?

- 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 Common Lodging Houses of the Victorian and Edwardian city? (Crook, 2008)
- 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).
- Housing (including home ownership) as a strategy for the working class to insulate themselves from the vagaries of capitalism.



# 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).
- The loss of a sense of stable community and place amongst younger generations: Council housing as the 'Gold Standard' (Watt, 2013): 'Not for us' and being 'kicked out.'
  - But also, 'the forgotten third': 'factory workers, tradespeople, school teachers and office workers' targeted by legislation for cooperative society supply of housing in the United States in the 1950s (von Hoffman, 2005).



## Consequences 2

*“An urban modernity haunted by that which it sought to overcome” (Crook, 2008, p. 429).*

*“They had learned to address problems by moving but now they had no new places to go.” (Boehm, 2009, p. 235-236).*



# 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.





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