

Towards a New Era of Public Housing: an alternative agenda

Paper presented at conference, *Housing Privatisation, 30 Years On: Time for a Critical Re-appraisal*, University of Leeds, July 2010

Abstract

The premise of this paper is that the progressive left needs to move beyond criticising the impacts of neoliberalism and put forward an alternative housing agenda. It is intended as a contribution to the debate on what that agenda should look like.

The paper argues for investment in more good quality, well-subsidised public housing (both new and refurbished) that could provide an attractive alternative to home ownership and promote greater equality. It argues for proper investment in a system of locally-based housing management. It argues for full and imaginative use of public housing's potential for co-ordinated planning. And it argues for these different aspects to be integrated together.

As academics, our work tends to focus on the fundamental task of 'interpreting the world in various ways'; but if 'the point is to change it' (Marx 1845),¹ then we need to move beyond interpretation (however critical) and address what those changes should be. That is what I want to begin to do in this paper.

Although I have started by quoting Marx, and although I recognise that thorough-going improvements in housing quality, and housing equality, will not be achieved without a thorough-going transformation of the nature of society overall, I will attempt to outline some important changes that could provide a first step towards better and fairer housing, even within our existing very imperfect social democracy. Because housing is so structurally important, these could help to promote wider social change.

No doubt, those who would describe themselves as pragmatists and practitioners of the 'politics of the possible' will dismiss these proposals as impossibly naïve; while revolutionary idealists will accuse me of selling out by avoiding issues of wider social change. However, I think it is possible to suggest, and campaign for, practical changes that could make a real difference in themselves, and perhaps also be the start of something bigger. And while few of these changes are likely to be implemented by the current Conservative coalition, it is imperative that more progressive Left forces formulate a serious alternative agenda.

The proposals I will begin to outline here fall under three separate headings: housing policy, housing management, and housing design. Although they can be discussed separately, none is sufficient on its own and each impacts on the others. Real improvements can only come out of a holistic approach.

The importance of public housing

I will start by looking at the pivotal role played by public housing. The purpose of housing policy should be the improvement of both housing quality and equality. Its focus needs to be on the provision of good homes, and, as a corollary to this, it needs to discourage the current emphasis on housing as speculative investment. This current emphasis on what Marxists would describe as the 'exchange value' at the expense of the 'use value,' has resulted in an often-degraded built environment, driven by the financial imperative of the bottom line. And it has propagated and nourished inequality. Those lucky enough to possess more property than they needed for themselves have been able to reap speculative gains, while those outside this charmed circle have been burdened with bigger mortgage debts and higher rents. House speculation also functions, in essence, as a sophisticated pyramid selling scheme, and makes for a very unstable economy - as has been demonstrated so dramatically.

There is nothing natural or necessarily desirable about home ownership. And, in fact, Britain is not so much a nation of home owners as a nation of debtors. (In 2007, 56 per cent of English owner-occupiers had a mortgage, and less than 12 per cent of owner-occupier couples with dependent children owned their home outright (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/doc/housingsurveysbulletin2.doc>)). Those who portray home ownership as a basic human desire are following a political agenda; and far from relying on instinctive demand, governments have used fiscal policy to incentivise and reward home ownership. Direct incentives have included mortgage interest tax relief, government aid to building societies, exemption from capital gains tax on house sales, improvement grants, and the new mortgage indemnity scheme. And, indirectly, the liberalisation of the financial markets and consequent credit boom fuelled the recent surge in property speculation and the financial imperative to get on the housing ladder. At the same time, council housing has been starved of funds and relegated to poor housing for poor people.

As Forrest and colleagues have pointed out,

... in the not so distant past in Britain discussion of housing tenure was relatively unimportant. Moreover, many of the dimensions of housing which are now inextricably associated with home ownership (e.g. independence, privacy, freedom, a garden) were seen [in the 1940s] as quite separate and no more an inherent feature of owning than of renting. (Forrest et al, 1990: 45)

A housing policy focused on housing as homes, and on promoting housing equality, would need to marginalise the use of housing for speculation. Rather than reward home owners, it would need to reduce the financial advantages of home ownership. The idea of tenure neutrality, where there is no intrinsic advantage of one type of tenure over another, is not a utopian dream but a very real possibility that for a period in Sweden became close to reality. To achieve this, as well as the attributes listed above, rented housing has to have rental agreements that are both secure and flexible, and rents need to be genuinely affordable – and significantly less than the cost of paying off a mortgage.

The Swedish model was based on a complicated system of differentially subsidised loans - which especially benefitted non-profit (mainly municipal) building corporations - and rent regulation. The key to its success was the level of investment in housing and in associated facilities that was possible under a high-tax, high-welfare regime that refused to idealise market relations. The essential characteristics of Swedish housing policy from the mid nineteen forties to the mid seventies can be summed up as: high government spending, high-quality homes and amenities in all neighbourhoods, the aim of equality between households and tenures, increasing security and autonomy for tenants, discouragement of speculation and its inevitable booms and slumps, and an emphasis on shared amenities and encouraging a sense of community. While none of the policy regimes developed over this period achieved all that had been envisaged by their legislators, housing policy played a very important part in Swedish social democracy, benefiting from and helping to maintain its relatively low levels of social stratification. Jim Kemeny has argued that under this system middle- and upper-income households showed little more propensity for ownership than did manual workers (Kemeny 1981: 102-106); though this was ultimately destroyed by the continuation of mortgage-interest tax relief, which, especially in a period of high interest rates, skewed the economics in favour of home owners.

Back in Britain, the twentieth century saw the majority of households become divided between home ownership and public rented housing. Public housing was recognised as necessary due to the well-demonstrated inability of the private-rented market to supply good affordable housing, as market pressures tend to reduce quality and security of tenure and to drive up rents (Glynn 2009). Nye Bevan's post-war housing policy allowed a brief glimpse of the possibilities of a more comprehensive system, which treated housing as a universal service (like the health service) and stressed the importance of not compromising on quality; however Britain's public housing was increasingly regarded as a residual tenancy for those who could not afford to own their own home. The homes built by Britain's local authorities improved the lives of a high proportion of working-class families, but there were growing – well publicised – problems, and at the heart of these were the key issues of housing supply and subsidy levels. Simply, there was never enough good public housing for everyone wanting it. Standards were cut, the available housing had to be rationed, and people were forced to turn to other options. When this limited housing was allocated on the basis of need, then it naturally came to be associated with those who were needy – often those on the lowest incomes. When different methods of allocation were used, or rents were too high, then those with the greatest need lost out. And these problems have only been exacerbated by 30 years of privatisation and financial attrition, which have decimated both the quantity and quality of Britain's public housing stock.

A solution to this is to create more good-quality, well-subsidised public housing, so that all who want it can use it. This would be most effective as part of a well-funded welfare state, as in the Swedish example, but significant improvements can be achieved through a different prioritising of existing funds – especially if account is taken of the wider picture.

To begin with, investment in public housing could generate immediate and direct savings. Many towns and cities have been using government subsidy to demolish public housing and encourage its replacement by private development, when it would cost much less to upgrade the existing buildings and keep them as public housing (Glynn, 2009; DTZ Pineda, 2005). Large savings (in both one-off and running costs) could also be made by ending the drive towards the stock transfer of publicly-owned council housing to privately-owned housing associations (House of Commons Council Housing Group, 2005), and this money could be invested directly in council housing. More public housing with low 'social' rents would mean less need for housing benefit. This would both reduce what is effectively a government subsidy for private landlords, and lift people out of benefit dependency.

But much more important than all of this, though impossible to measure, are the savings that would result from better housing, and the consequent better health and life chances, and from the greater social cohesion of a more equal society. These all have huge financial as well as social implications.

Investment in expanding, as well as improving, public housing is also the best way to end the residualisation and stigmatisation of the tenure that has resulted from years of under-investment and privatisation: to stop it being regarded as only a safety-net of poor houses for poor people, and a label of social failure. Concerns over the concentrations of poverty produced by this residualisation have led planners to adopt the mantra of 'mixed-tenure' development, despite lack of evidence of the benefits for tenants of having a homeowner next door. However, if public housing were allowed to expand again, then so would the social base of its tenants. Turnover rates would be reduced, and there would be more people with the time, energy and skills that could help generate more stable communities.

The first step in creating an attractive public rental sector is to discard assumptions that public housing should only be made available as a last resort for those who cannot find anything else. That means scrapping ill-conceived calculations of social housing 'need' (such as the Local Housing Need and Affordability Model used by the Scottish Government, Bramley et al 2006), and ending large-scale demolitions, except where there really are serious structural problems. It also means no more privatisation of the best homes under 'Right to Buy'. Instead, long-term tenants could be rewarded with rent holidays (which would be transferred to the new tenancy should they move), retaining their home in public ownership for future use. (A scheme along these lines was put forward by the Scottish Socialist Party, before it split into two.)

Next, we need investment in new public housing and in upgrading existing homes and estates. And investment needs to continue after the homes have been constructed, or the refurbishment programme has been completed, because, like any building, public housing needs regular repair and maintenance. The importance of this was dramatically – and wastefully – illustrated by two groups of medium-rise flats in Lochee in West Dundee that were built to identical plans. One group was allowed to become very run down, and few tenants objected to being moved out to

allow its recent demolition. The other received an injection of money and a make-over some years back, and the flats are much sought after.²

Homes that are less popular can usually be improved rather than demolished, and it is important that each case is properly analysed and understood in order that plans can tackle genuine problems: so that, for example, buildings are not demolished because one of the residents has started to deal in drugs, or even because there is a damp problem that could be resolved by over-cladding.

Properly-funded public housing should make possible well thought out systems of management and planning that can take account of all these issues and allow the development of socially and ecologically sustainable communities. However, as history demonstrates, while investment in public housing is a necessary condition for a good housing policy, it is not in itself sufficient. I want to turn now to the often neglected area of how this public housing should be managed.

Local and tenant-centred management

Few people would defend the bureaucracy that has surrounded Britain's public housing. While councils vied with each other to build increasing numbers of homes, the management of those homes seems often to have been relegated to an afterthought (Power, 1987; Ravetz, 2001). On top of cash-starved construction, chronic shortages of funds for repair and maintenance, and shortages of housing that have exacerbated the difficulties of allocation, council tenants have found themselves subject to top-down, distant control, that has frequently been both authoritarian and inefficient.

But there is no need for management to be this way. It is possible to construct a locally-based system of management that would be much more responsive to people's actual needs and much quicker in dealing with problems when they occur and before they precipitate larger problems. Back in 1987, Anne Power was calling for management to be devolved to locally-based open access offices,³ and localised management would also need to impact up the management structure so as to try and ensure that households were allocated homes that best fitted their needs and wants, and to facilitate housing transfers within the system.

In addition, the experiences of big housing blocks have shown how a full-time concierge scheme can make a crucial difference to tenants' quality of life.⁴ A concierge is able to deal with problems quickly and in a low-key manner. As one of the Dundee concierges explained to me, 'It's like you could be a social worker, financial advisor, you name it, you are it ... It's a combination of everything. 'Cos you build a relationship with the tenants, you see.' (Interviewed 18 August 2006. He also emphasised that they did not take on responsibilities for which they were not trained.) This could be a model for the kind of community policing that is often proposed for troubled housing estates, and there would be scope to combine concierge and management functions, bringing greater efficiency and flexibility – and eliminating a layer of red tape.

One of the areas that has most potential to disrupt lives and generate those familiar media images of public-housing failure is the anti-social behaviour of a small

minority of tenants. While this is clearly inseparable from much bigger structural questions of employment and service provision, sensitive local management can make a difference. Possible interventions would include relocating families known to have a serious drug problem so as to cause minimum disturbance to others, helping to negotiate in disputes between neighbours, and ensuring sensitive and tailored assistance to families overwhelmed by a weight of different problems. The possibilities and limits of intervention in this last category are demonstrated by the, much written about, Dundee Families Project. While this is clearly not the panacea claimed by its New Labour admirers, it has shown how intensive personalised attention can make the difference to some families and help them carve a way through what would otherwise be an unbearable multiplicity of problems.⁵ This will only ever help a few people – notably those who are prepared to be helped – and needs to be backed up by properly resourced services in areas such as drug treatment; however it does demonstrate the importance of a holistic and flexible approach. This type of approach should run right through housing management, but, at the same time, management has to avoid the risks of old fashioned paternalism.

If localised management is to succeed in meeting the needs of tenants, then tenants have to be given the opportunity to play an active part. While local authority ownership ensures a measure of overall democratic control, when it comes to local decisions on the sort of issues that often make a community work, tenants need to have a statutory organisational role. This can be achieved through tenant management organisations (TMOs), which, despite some successful examples in the 1980s (Scott, 2000), and despite being officially promoted by the New Labour government and supported by all main parties, have so far only been taken up by a very small proportion of tenants – usually as a result of dissatisfaction with existing management and repairs.⁶ TMOs include Tenant Management Co-ops where tenants constitute the whole board, and others where they are simply a majority. When a TMO is set up this has to be agreed by a ballot of tenants, and the ballot must be repeated every five years. Sizes of TMO vary (from 12 tenancies to 9,760) and so do the organisations' remits. Many choose not to carry out rent collections, and different systems have been worked out for influencing allocations of tenancies – which can be a sensitive issue and a potential source of friction with controlling councils. An evaluation of English TMOs carried out for the government in 2002 (Cairncross et al, 2002), found they were generally well managed and were especially effective in dealing with small repairs, cleaning and general maintenance, with some employing their own handyman. Although turn-outs for AGMs were not high, and it could be difficult recruiting board members, few TMOs had failed, and they were well supported in the 5 yearly ballots. Local organisation can encourage a sense of community, and many TMOs extend their remit beyond basic housing functions. Small surpluses are spent on estate improvements and social activities, and some TMOs have set up credit unions. The report found that non-housing activities carried out by Belle Isle TMO in Leeds included a project that supported young tenants (often care leavers) in the first year of their first tenancy. And they found that the same organisation resolved neighbour disputes through arbitration by a board member from another part of the estate. The main difficulty for TMOs as a whole that was identified by the report was 'often problematic' relations with council staff.

Not all areas will want such active involvement, and some TMOs may be wanted initially, but fail later; however when that happens homes can be taken back into full council management, which should still be kept locally based.

Care has to be taken that this kind of tenant involvement does not replace and exclude more campaigning forms of tenant organisation. Anyone who has been involved with community groups will be familiar with pressures from the authorities to co-opt and incorporate independent organisations and close down criticism; and tenants groups have proved particularly susceptible through schemes for registration and grant funding (Glynn, 2010). Beyond and separate from such management organisations, there also needs to be independent tenant-controlled campaigning organisation to make sure tenants can maintain their own voice: something that can act like a trade union for tenants, with very active local branches (Glynn 2009).

The key to successful management can be found in this triple structure: central, democratically-elected council ownership and control for overall planning across the city or region (and catering to the needs of future as well as current tenants); locally-based control with active tenant involvement (for day-to-day management); and a strong independent tenants' voice.

Planned places

If public housing offers opportunities for developing sympathetic systems of management, then it offers even greater opportunities for co-ordinated and holistic planning and construction. Again, so far these opportunities have largely been wasted. The construction of public housing has suffered not only from chronic under-funding, but also from the application of, often misconceived, grand theories. The combination of misconceived grand theories and mean budgets has produced some especially depressing results. We have, however, learnt many lessons from previous failures, as well as from, often less spectacular, successes.

As an architecture student I was taught to learn from past mistakes and plan dense cities that still retained their relationship to the human scale and that combined different functions so as to minimise travel and encourage the development of local community. But what I was not taught was that I was very unlikely to be able to see these things built, because the primary influence impacting on the majority of new building in our cities is the developers' bottom line. With public housing this should not be the case. Of course cost is still important (and, historically, housing budgets have often been destructively tight), but the real issue is value for money over the long term, which is a very different thing. What makes good public housing is not essentially different from what makes good private housing, but because it is developed by the public sector there is more scope for integrating it into a considered overall plan and also for incorporating features that have a social benefit but no immediate economic return.

Home planning for the long-term interests of the community has to include all those other things outwith the house that make a place somewhere where people like to live. It is not just about creating dormitories, however comfortable, where

households isolate themselves behind their front doors. It is also about ensuring good local services – schools, health centres, libraries, youth-clubs, shops, pubs and public transport – and inviting and varied public spaces. These are not luxuries that can be cut when funds are tight. It is also about integrating housing with employment, and reducing the environmental and human waste of long journeys to work and of unemployment. The housing itself needs to be varied enough to suit a range of lifestyles and life stages; combined, of course, with a management system that ensures sympathetic allocations and ease of transfer between tenancies, and scope for tenants to personalise their own home.

While investment in public housing would make possible the creation of well thought out places, only a minority of these are likely to be of totally new construction, just as only a minority of the total population lives in new homes. The refurbishment of existing public housing – including much housing currently scheduled for demolition – can and should provide the basis of many of these homes. The principal aim behind the majority of demolition that is currently being carried out in the name of ‘regeneration’ is the reduction of public housing and the generation of opportunities for private development. The primary beneficiaries of this process, which Jason Hackworth and Neil Smith have described as ‘third wave gentrification’, are large-scale capital interests; and the impacts on existing poorer communities have been overwhelmingly destructive and disastrous (Glynn, 2009; Hackworth and Smith, 2001). While developers and associated financial services have made huge profits, poorer households have been given little consideration in the new developments and have found themselves increasingly marginalised to peripheral areas of low land-value, and increasingly dependent on the insecure private-rented sector. Arguments for mixed tenure have been used to justify demolition of large city centre estates, but the result has often been a new geographical segregation. The rhetoric of community consultation has failed to disguise a break up and dispersal of communities that recalls the much criticised clearance schemes of the 1960s.

There are good social reasons for replacing this demolition with refurbishment. It can also require much less public money than is spent on promoting wholesale redevelopment (Glynn 2009); and it is generally a great deal greener. It avoids most of the embodied energy costs associated with demolition and rebuilding, and can be used to retain and enhance communities with high population densities, which can sustain local services and transport links. These environmental arguments are taken up in some detail in Anne Power’s detailed research in England (Power, 2008). She does not extend her discussion to tower blocks, which she does not like for other reasons, but these compact buildings can be particularly well-suited to green conversions, and this was the subject of a dedicated website set up by a firm of engineers in 2004 (www.sustainingtowers.org by Price and Myers).

The refurbishment of public housing should allow for the planned and efficient use of sustainable technologies for the long-term benefit of tenants, local authority owners, and society more generally. However, this needs to be done with care, else we risk repeating the same kind of wholesale mistakes that were made when councils rushed into the arms of the system builders in the 60s and 70s. Poorly designed

cladding can encourage the spread of fire – as seems to have occurred in the fatal blaze in a Southwark tower block in July 2009 (*Inside Housing* 24 July 2009) – or trap moisture in the walls forcing it back inside the building, as appears to have happened in several of the newly clad blocks in Glasgow (discussion with Sean Clerkin of Glasgow Save Our Homes, June 2010). However, a well designed cladding system can bring a building up to high environmental standards very economically (compared to rebuilding); and when investment is planned for long term benefit there is scope to incorporate more creative solutions such as including photovoltaic panels on south facing walls and glazing in balconies for passive solar gain.

More public housing can also be created by buying up existing private housing of different kinds. This has been done in the past, producing opportunities for some imaginative re-planning. So, for example, in the 1970s, almost 20,000 Scottish tenement flats were rehabilitated by local authorities or housing associations, with dividing walls rearranged to provide fewer larger dwellings (Gibb, 1989: 175); while Camden Council bought up whole blocks of Victorian terraces in Somerstown, and cut the ends off all the back gardens so the land could be combined into spacious and protected community gardens and play areas for all the surrounding homes, as agreed by tenants' vote (Information from residents, John Twigg and Angela Inglis).

The Camden gardens provide just one example of the kind of improvement that can be achieved when investment and planning are driven by the aim of long term community development rather than immediate profit. And there are many other things that can be incorporated into both new and existing housing - to the benefit of tenants, the community and the environment - that should all be easier to achieve in public housing. Public housing provides opportunities for the development of more sustainable and efficient schemes for community-based heat and power generation or even sewage treatment. There is no space here to go into details of the different energy efficient and environment-friendly technologies that are becoming available; however, public housing, with its economies of scale and potential for long-term planning, is already making good use of combined heat and power systems. These have both an electricity generator and boilers, which could be run on gas or biomass. When electricity is generated, the large amount of waste heat is recovered and used to supplement the boilers that supply district heating and hot water, while homes can still be separately metered to encourage efficient energy usage. This results in a very efficient system. Capital costs are high but more than offset by longer-term savings in energy and energy bills. Aberdeen City Council has installed gas-powered combined heat and power systems in 850 flats and 8 public buildings and claims that this has cut their fuel usage in half (Combined Heat and Power Association, <http://www.chpa.co.uk>).

Public housing would also be well positioned to make use of green technologies for sewage treatment, though these are currently less well developed than heating systems. Inspiration might be found in Findhorn Ecovillage, which uses an ecologically engineered treatment plant that has been running since 1995 and is claimed to save energy as well as avoiding the use of chlorine or other chemicals. This plant works on the same principle as natural wetlands, and its successive tanks are home to carefully chosen ecosystems of plants and micro-organisms. In temperate

climates these have to be kept in a greenhouse, and the result is remarkably attractive (and almost odour-free). However a similar system installed in the BedZed housing scheme in Sutton (which was promoted as the UK's first zero-carbon housing) was abandoned as inefficient and difficult to maintain – though they also gave up on their combined heat and power system (*Building* 3 July 2009). Once again, proper maintenance appears as a key issue, but there is also the need for continued critical monitoring of the use and potential of these new technologies.

With relatively little financial investment, but active tenant involvement (planning cannot be considered in isolation from management), spaces between the houses can be used to benefit different interest groups and help develop a more cohesive community over all. There is particular scope to develop more for young people – and respond to that often-heard complaint that there is nothing for young people to do. Playgrounds and sports facilities, club rooms, even recording studios can all help here, especially when the potential users are actively involved in setting them up. And, at the other end of the age scale, there are many small changes that can allow older people greater mobility, with benefits for both their mental and physical health. As our elderly populations have increased in size, there has been growing recognition of the big impact of such small things as unobstructed level paths, ample and strategically placed outdoor seating, sheltered bus-stops, and pedestrian crossings that do not expect pedestrians to sprint (World Health Organisation, 2007). And older users can especially benefit from and support local shops and other services. Again, the best people to work out the details of what is needed are those who will benefit.

For relatively active people of all ages, there is the possibility of finding land for vegetable gardens. These are not only increasingly popular in themselves – many places have queues for existing allotments – but can help facilitate social interaction. In addition, and especially when they are inserted into large existing schemes, they can provide important visual variety and interest. Health benefits are gained from the physical exercise of gardening, as well as from the resulting fresh vegetables, and these can also make a difference to stretched family budgets. There is no shortage of expert help and advice available for such projects, and a briefing paper produced by the Women's Environmental Network together with Sustain (2008) suggests that food production in existing estates could extend to balconies and walkways or growbags on top of concreted areas, and could incorporate composting schemes. The briefing emphasises the importance of active residential involvement, right from the early planning stages, and is illustrated with successful examples of community gardens in London housing estates. Similar examples can be found across the world. As with so much of what I have discussed here, none of these ideas involves grand theories or grand designs, but rather common sense solutions and a lot of dedicated work.

Good sensitive design can facilitate everyday living and provide a source of pleasure in itself, but for a reminder that this is not enough we can learn from the history of Newcastle's Byker Estate (Glynn 2011). Designed by Ralph Erskine (who - not uncoincidentally – chose to base his practice in Sweden), and constructed in the 1970s, the estate combined attention to architectural detail with careful landscaping. While the idea that it was developed with minimum disruption to the existing community is sadly largely myth, the homes were designed with a rare sensitivity to

the needs of family and community life, and the estate is still extraordinarily attractive. However, from the 1980s, poor maintenance and very high local levels of unemployment have combined with the general residualisation and stigmatisation of public housing to ensure that Byker has had its share of social deprivation and attendant problems. Conversely, there are few estates so badly designed that judicious interventions and good management cannot make them into good homes.

The way ahead

This paper is a first, very rough, (and probably over-ambitious) attempt to outline an alternative housing programme. It has shown the fundamental role of public housing in generating a better and fairer system that concentrates on housing as homes and minimises speculation - using the historic Swedish example to show that tenure neutrality is both achievable and beneficial. It has discussed the importance of good responsive management that is locally-based and gives tenants an active role, proposing this as part of a tripartite system alongside democratically elected local authority ownership and independent tenants' organisation. It has demonstrated how public housing – in refurbished existing buildings as well as new - allows opportunities for co-ordinated planning and design that take account of long term community interests, including the provision of other services and the use of green technologies. And it has stressed the importance of taking account of all these different aspects and their interactions with each other.

A paper of this kind can only begin to scratch the surface of what is needed and will inevitably raise more questions than it answers. But these are questions that need to be raised. A lot more work needs to be done looking at and learning from examples of different housing from around the world – and especially learning from the experiences of those who live in it. And the lessons learnt need to be brought together to discover the most constructive matrices of overall policy, everyday management and physical design. If this paper can play a part in the generation of alternative housing practices that put quality of life at the centre of all decisions, then it will have achieved what it set out to do.

Bibliography

Bramley, Glen, Noah Kofi Karley and David Watkins (2006) *Local housing need and affordability model for Scotland – Update (2005 based)* (Edinburgh: Communities Scotland), and later derivatives of this model

Cairncross, Liz, Caroline Morrell, Jane Darke and Sue Brownhill (2002) *Tenants Managing: An Evaluation of Tenant Management Organisations in England*, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

DTZ Piedad (2005) *Dundee City Council – Financial Viability Study Phase 2: Final Report* (Accessed through FoI legislation and quoted in GLYNN, 2009)

Dillane, Jennifer, Malcolm Hill, Jon Bannister and Suzie Scott (2001) *Evaluation of the Dundee Families Project* University of Glasgow

< <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/158816/0043123.pdf>> [accessed July 2010]

Gibb, Andrew (1989) 'Policy and politics in Scottish housing since 1945' in Richard Rodger (Ed) *Scottish Housing in the Twentieth Century*, Leicester: Leicester University Press

Glynn, Sarah (2009) (Ed) *Where the other half lives: lower-income housing in a neoliberal world* London: Pluto Press

Glynn, Sarah (2010) 'The Tenants' Movement: incorporation and independence' in *The Glasgow Papers: Critical perspectives on community development*, edited by Akwugo Emejulu and Mae Shaw, Community Development Journal

Glynn, Sarah (2011) 'Good Homes: lessons in successful public housing from Newcastle's Byker Estate' Paper given to colloquium on The Housing Crisis: Experience, Analysis and Response, Birkbeck 18 November 2011
< file:///C:/Users/Sarah%20Glynn/Documents/website/images/Good%20Homes.pdf >

Gregg, David (2010) *Family Intervention Projects: a classic case of policy based evidence*, Centre for Crime and Justice Studies
<http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/opus1786/Family_intervention_projects.pdf> [accessed July 2010]

Forrest, Ray, Alan Murie and Peter Williams (1990) *Home Ownership: differentiation and fragmentation* (London: Unwin Hyman)

Hackworth, Jason and Neil Smith (2001) 'The changing state of gentrification' *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 92(4)

House of Commons Council Housing Group (2005) 'Support for the "Fourth Option" for Council Housing: Report on the enquiry into the future funding of council housing 2004–2005'
<http://www.support4councilhousing.org.uk/report/resources/HoCCHG_report.pdf>, [accessed August 2008]

Kemeny, Jim (1981) *The Myth of Home Ownership: Private versus public choices in housing tenure* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul)

Marx, Karl, 1845, *Thesis on Feuerbach*,
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/theses.htm> [accessed July 2010]

Nixon, Judy Hal Pawson and Filip Sosenko, 'Breaking the Cycle: a comparative account of the development of family intervention projects in Scotland and England' paper given to Housing Studies Association, April 2009

Pawson, Hal, Emma Davidson, Filip Sosenko, John Flint, Judy Nixon, Rionach Casey, Diana Sanderson (2009) *Evaluation of Intensive Family Support Projects in Scotland*, Herriot-Watt University, Sheffield Hallam University and Mill Mount Consulting
< <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/05/14121100/0>> [accessed July 2010]

Power, Anne (1987) *Property Before People: the Management of Twentieth-Century Council Housing*, London: Allen and Unwin

Power, Anne (2008) 'Does demolition or refurbishment of old and inefficient homes help to increase our environmental, social and economic viability?' *Energy Policy* 36 pp 4487-4501

Ravetz, Alison (2001) *Council Housing and Culture: the history of a social experiment*, London: Routledge

Scott, S (2000) 'The People's Republic of Yoker: a case study of tenant management in Scotland.' *Journal of Co-operative Studies* 33:1: 15-38

Women's Environmental Network and Sustain (2008) 'Growing Round the Houses: Food production on housing estates' briefing paper

World Health Organisation (2007) *Global Age-friendly Cities: a guide*
<http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf> [accessed July 2010]

NOTES

¹ Marx wrote, 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.'

² Foggeyley Gardens has now been demolished. Nearby Dryburgh Gardens is owned by a housing association, but the differences can be attributed to investment and maintenance rather than tenure.

³ There are also lessons to be learnt from some of the small locally-based housing associations; but this is not an argument for replacing council landlords with housing associations. There is no space to go into the arguments in favour of council housing here, (but see House of Commons Council Housing Group, 2005); however, it is worth pointing out that small housing associations do not generally stay small for long as they get taken over by bigger associations with centralised business structures.

⁴ The Dundee City Council website claimed that thanks to the introduction of concierges for their multi-storey housing 'there is now a waiting list for some of these blocks, when once they had empty properties'. Perversely, when I accessed this in

October 2006 the council was busy dismantling the system and preparing to demolish the buildings concerned, despite opposition from the majority of tenants.

⁵ The Dundee Families Project, established in 1996, became a model for ‘Family Intervention Projects’ across the UK, especially as part of New Labour’s Respect Agenda. The New Labour Government put a positive spin on the Project’s outcomes, which, as Dave Gregg has shown, is by no means fully born out by a more detailed look at the statistics. It also introduced a much stronger emphasis on sanctions for those who did not co-operate. Such a punitive approach would undermine the relationship between project workers and families, though how much would depend on how workers interpret it on the ground (Gregg, 2010; Dillane et al, 2001; Pawson et al, 2009; Nixon et al, 2009).

⁶ In 2001-2 TMOs managed <3% of English council tenancies (Cairncross et al, 2002) Tenant management was first legislated for in 1975. It was given more help in 1986 and Tenants were given a Right to Manage in 1993.