

Urban Times - The New Old Town - An Idealized Future

urbantimes.co. May, 2012. This post builds on concepts originally introduced by “[Why Place Matters in the Built Environment: Part I](#)” and “[Why Place Matters in the Built Environment: Part II](#).” In essence this article presents an idealized version of the future which takes into account the constraints within which we are currently operating (in terms of diminishing natural resources) while using the emerging concepts of place discussed in the previous two articles.

At some point in the coming decades societies across the globe will face a reality of rapidly declining oil supplies. We will have effectively explored, extracted, and consumed the world’s oil supplies to the point where we cannot feasibly run the same system that we have been this past century. Societies have to adapt to this reality and find a new way of living, thus the push for sustainability. The United States, despite what some believe, is not exempt from this reality.

Read more: <http://urbantimes.co/magazine/the-new-old-town-an-idealized-future>

Neil Hadden - A Balancing Act: Protecting Tenants In A More Commercial World

www.theguardian.com. April, 25, 2013. In today’s world, where government grant for housing is scarce, housing associations have to strike a new balance between their social values and commercial needs. Our latest report with the Smith Institute assesses this difficult question and the impact that it will have on the future of the housing sector.

Our last study, which looked at the reduction of home ownership and the rise of

the private rented sector, hinted at the implications for housing associations of generation rent, as it becomes a significant demographic influence. Genesis has evolved considerably since 1965, when our predecessor Paddington Churches Housing Association (PCHA) was formed, but the core activity of helping those who are unable to access council housing or private home ownership continues. The question is: what should we be doing today?

Social housing providers have had to act more commercially as the availability of public subsidy for new development has dwindled. Commercial work should be a legitimate territory for housing associations; after all, who else is going to intervene in any meaningful way in a dysfunctional housing market?

Read more: <http://www.theguardian.com/social-landlords-commercial-work?>

Housing Sector In Eurasia Needs A Mind Shift And Greater Cooperation For Effective Solutions

ecahousingforum.eu. Geneva, Switzerland. April 24, 2013

To solve housing problems in the region, practical as well as strategic actions are needed with more emphasis on education and awareness among citizens about their rights and responsibilities in relation to shelter, property and housing

Raquel Rolnik, UN Special Rapporteur for Adequate Housing, said in a video message to the delegates of the second Housing Forum for Europe & Central Asia a paradigm shift is needed from the belief that the market can solve all housing problems. She emphasized as the ongoing crisis since 2008 demonstrates, we need to redefine the responsibility of states in providing social services, including housing.

A market approach is necessary to develop housing microfinance and residential energy efficiency, among many other things, but state intervention for vulnerable groups, like the Roma, elderly, low-income, mentally and physically challenged, or refugees, cannot be overlooked. At the same time, international organizations and NGOs should shift from direct services toward shaping market solutions and policies.

These are some of the outcomes of the second Housing Forum Europe & Central Asia, which concluded on April 24, 2013, in Geneva, Switzerland. The debates and discussions touched on important thematic areas such as housing inclusiveness and equal access to adequate standards of living in cities, including the right to adequate housing.

Read more: <http://ecahousingforum.eu/housing-news-articles/>

Saleem Ali - Alleviating Energy Poverty in South Africa's Slums



Photo: Saleem H. Ali - The energy landscape of Khayelitsha.

The sweeping slums of Khayelitsha outside Cape Town are a stark reminder of the endemic inequality that continues to haunt South Africa almost twenty years since the end of apartheid. Here we find around half a million people living in a sea of shacks that are often associated with urban blight across the developing world.

Yet, the sight of these shelters made of corrugated steel and wood in an informal settlement should not necessarily evoke fatalism about this land. The typical South African shack is a versatile piece of simple engineering that only costs around \$400 to buy and meets the basic needs of shelter for its residents.

Nevertheless, the government recognizes the need for providing more stable housing through its Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which

has provided around 3 million homes to South Africans since the end of apartheid. Those living in the shacks on less than an inflation-adjusted amount per month are entitled to apply for RDP housing, though the waiting period can be as much as 10 years. Unlike high-rise low-income housing in China, the demand in South Africa is to have a small tract of land and a hut as the residence. Human ingenuity and resilience beams through through many residents in these areas as they traverse their life journeys from shacks to RDP huts.

Read more: <http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com>

William Cobbett - How Cities Can Get Rid of Slums By Supporting Them

nextcity.org. April 22, 2013. In a guest blog post, William Cobbett, Manager of the [Cities Alliance](#), argues that cities can eliminate slums is by getting behind the people who live in them.

After a decade of announcements that the world is now more urban than rural, there are signs that governments and agencies are finally taking notice. During the course of the next three decades, the waistlines of thousands of cities will expand to accommodate new populations — while the world's urban population doubles, cities' land consumption will triple.

To make this process as successful and as sustainable as possible, there is an urgent need for national and local policy makers to dramatically change their policy responses. Globally, the biggest cause of badly managed slums is not rural-urban migration, nor people squatting on public land, nor poverty itself. The biggest factor is wrong-headed policy responses, and ill-informed, outdated and clumsy administration, all underpinned by a hostile and aggressive attitude to the urban and urbanizing poor. Quite simply, bad policy creates most slums, and ensures that slums do not improve.

Instead, mayors and city managers can help their cities by accepting what exists and working with it.

Most urban growth takes place in existing cities, not new ones, and mostly in small- and medium-sized cities. The dominant form of planning is feet and facts on the ground, not color-coded zones on the Master Plan (if it exists). Most city growth is informal, and development will be incremental as people improve their living conditions over time, as and when they can afford. Most employment is informal, too, with household enterprises dominant. The role of women is essential to stability and progress.

Slums disappear not through being removed, but by being transformed. Over time, the shack becomes a house, the slum becomes a suburb. This is how citizenship and cities are built.

Read *more:*
<http://nextcity.org/informalcity/entry/how-cities-can-get-rid-of-slums-by-supporting-them>

Abby Higgins - Why Residents Of Kibera Slum Are Rejecting New Housing Plans

one.org - This guest post is by journalist Abby Higgins, in partnership with The Seattle Globalist. It's the fourth in a five-part series which reveals the economically complex and culturally rich life of urban slums, and challenges our perceptions of what life is like for the one billion people around the world that live in them.

Mildred Lunani knew that if she stayed in her village in Western Kenya she could pretty much count on a life of poverty. So, like the 200,000 people around the world who move to cities from rural areas every day, she came to the capital in

search of opportunity. She found that opportunity in Kibera, the slum that her and her family now call home.

She opened up The District Commissioner's Restaurant, a small place named after the police station next door. Equipped with a window for take away food and a few rickety wooden tables, she offers donuts, samosas and sodas to the flood of people passing by on their way in and out of Kibera each day. Lunani was also trained as a community health worker by an NGO in Kibera and spends several days a week working to spread awareness about HIV and AIDS.

"Kibera is a good place. The community, the people, my neighbours, they mean a lot to me, I love that part of Kibera. But the housing, some of the housing isn't fit for humans. The toilets, the water?" She shook her head in disgust.

In 2009, Mildred learned of an opportunity to move her family out of Kibera's substandard housing: The Kenya Slum Upgrading Project (KENSUP) launched by the Kenyan Ministry of Housing with the support of UN-Habitat and several other donor organisations.

Read

more: <http://www.one.org/why-residents-of-kibera-slum-are-rejecting-new-housing-plans/>