Polly Toynbee – No Exit: Britain's Social Housing Trap

Ills.: www.itshistorypodcasts.com

theguardian.com. November 2014. To estate agents, England's Lane, tucked away in a corner of Hampstead, is one of London's most sought-after villages. Along its tree-lined length stretches a charming row of small shops, with a tearoom serving gentlemen's relish on toast, a toy shop full of hand-crafted wooden toys, and a butcher that sells pheasant and grouse. In the window of the DesRes estate agency, flats are offered for rent at £1,500 a week, and just opposite, down a private side road, a seven-bedroom arts-and-crafts style mansion, set in a garden the size of a small park, is on sale for £6.7m.

Walking along England's Lane, passersby might not notice a mildly forbidding building behind railings, an old nurses' home that in 2004 was turned into a hostel for Camden's homeless families, despite protests from local homeowners that it was "not suitable" for the location. The 160 families squeezed into this large red brick block do not visit the shops and cafes here, nor do they get facials at the naturopathic beauty salon, or gaze at the estate agent's window. Each family has a very small room, originally designed for a single student nurse.

The England's Lane hostel was intended to provide temporary accommodation for homeless families; however, once they move in here, "temporary" can mean years. The hostel is a modern day version of Dickens's Marshalsea prison from Little Dorrit, a reluctant community with its own hierarchy of suffering, where

years are ticked off by unlucky people who have run aground for one reason or another.

Read more:

McKinsey Global Institute ~ Four Steps To Fix the Global Affordable Housing Shortage

Photo: stealmag.com

According to global consultancy firm McKinsey & Company, the projected cost of providing affordable housing to 330 million households around the world currently living in substandard accommodation is $16 trillion USD. The firm's latest report, *A Blueprint for Addressing the Global Affordable Housing Challenge*, assesses critical pathways for providing housing to families across a range of socio-economic backgrounds and nationalities. According to the report, adequate and affordable housing could be out of reach for more than 1.6 billion people within a decade. The comprehensive report examines everything from income to cost of heating, boiling down the data into four key mandates aimed at solving the global housing crisis.

The proposed solution is one of ascending goals, similar to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, with a four-tiered plan targeted towards households earning 80% or less of

the median income for any given region. The program is designed to meet McKinsey's *2025 Housing Challenge* which aims to provide housing to a projected 440 million households worldwide within ten years through community engagement, gathering funding, appropriate delivery of housing models, and creation of governmental infrastructure to sustain housing.

Read more: http://stealmag.com/architecture

Download and read the report in its entirety or listen to the abridged version in a podcast published by the McKinsey Global Institute in October 2014 here.

Frederika Whitehead – Poo Power: Turning Human Waste Into Clean Energy

Photo: thestar.com.my

thestar.com.my November 2014. Bio-centres which transform human waste into electricity prove that faeces is the ultimate source of renewable energy.

They call them *"flying toilets"* – the bags of human poo that are thrown out of the windows of the thousands of small shacks that make up Nairobi's slums.
The largest of Nairobi's informal settlements is Kibera, just 4.8km from the city

centre. An estimated one million people live there, and toilet facilities are scarce. The bare earth streets are carved with gullies: equal parts open sewer and rubbish dump. The nearest toilet for most people is a hole they have dug in a bare patch of ground at the back of their shacks.

But Josiah Omotto, a managing trustee of the Umande trust, has high ambitions: he wants Nairobi to become an open defecation-free city. It's a big challenge to set for yourself.
"If open defecation was banned in Nairobi today, every member of the informal settlements would have to queue for two days to use the existing toilet facilities," he says.

Read more: http://www.thestar.com.my/Poo-power

Urban Transformations: World Cities Day

Photo: steps-centre.org

Leading Urban Transformations is the theme for World Cities Day on 31 October 2014.

Urbanisation and economic growth go hand-in-hand. How to balance rapid economic growth with sustainable management of ecosystem services and enhanced social justice are crucial issues to the health and livelihoods of the world's citizens. Our work encourages the rethinking of urban planning initiatives

through a sustainability lens.

We have been working with academics, NGOS, policy makers and practitioners around the world to research mainstream development interventions aiming to address environmental and resource management challenges in rapidly urbanising transitional spaces.In India we work closely with partners including several schools at Jawaharlal Nahru University, Toxics Link and Sarai in New Delhi.

By exploring the hidden impacts such interventions have on the wellbeing of urban and peri-urban citizens and the environment we are highlighting alternative pathways to sustainability based on an enhanced understanding of complex, diverse and risk-prone urban and peri-urban situations.

This page features highlights from our work on how citizens, science, policy and politics interact in this area. It includes selected projects, events and peer-reviewed articles.

Brochure: [Sustainable cities: research in rapidly urbanising India](#) (PDF)

Read more: http://steps-centre.org/about/hot-topics/urbanisation/

Séverine Deneulin & Roy Maconachie – Gated Communities Lock Cities Into Cycles Of Inequality

Photo: en.wikipedia.org

theconversation.com. November 2014. In recent years, many films have portrayed the landscape of urban marginality and inequality in Latin America. Brazil Central Station and City of God were both popular, but few can rival the Mexican thriller, La Zona (the Zone), in depicting the disturbing panorama of inequality in Latin America's megacities and the consequences of socially and economically divided cities.

The film is set within the confines of a gated community in Mexico. High security walls and guards encircle a hundred or so large houses with lush, evergreen gardens. The residents have their own council and make their own rules and regulations.

One night, a group of outsiders infiltrates the fencing through a domestic service entry loop. They break into a number of houses and kill one resident. A skirmish ensues between the residents and the infiltrators, and all the intruders are killed except for one, a young adolescent boy who manages to escape but is trapped within the gated community.

Read more: http://theconversation.com/gated-communities

Stefanie Spear – Transitioning To

Urban Resilience

If current trends continue, by 2050 70 percent of the world's population will live in cities, according to the [Action4Climate video competition](#) film Rotterdam—The Transition to Urban Resilience. Filmmaker Lieke 't Gilde says it's time to recognize the city as a natural ecosystem in order to meet human needs now and in the future. Gilde says that "nature-based and innovative solutions are essential for a sustainable future for cities all over the planet."

The film takes place in Rotterdam, the second-largest city in the Netherlands and one of the largest ports in the world. It introduces the URBES project—Urban Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services—which is a partnership that develops ideas, tools and knowledge that are shared and co-created with cities in Europe.

Check out this inspiring film to learn about the sustainability projects that are transitioning Rotterdam to a resilient city.

Read more: http://ecowatch.com/2014/10/29/transitioning-urban-resilience/