

# Michael Kihato - The Problem Is Housing

*housingfinanceafrica.org*. May 6, 2013

At the heart of the Arab spring was a lack of affordable housing, a bold statement I read in a [magazine article](#), which went on to say that: *the shortage of affordable homes is one of the underlying causes of the social unrest and the resulting political turmoil that has spread across the MENA region during the Arab Spring of 2011.*

I was initially quite skeptical and thought as many would, this was simplification of a much more complex problem. Further, common sense dictates that it is more about poverty and a lack of jobs. If you have money, you can afford and buy a house. Let us deal with the underlying problem of poverty, and housing the masses will follow.

Well, maybe it is not such a wild notion. There is some merit to singling out lack of housing as a catalyst to social unrest. One is that it has potent symbolism. Houses in a very tangible and visible way capture the life aspirations of people. A man's (and woman's) home is their castle, goes the saying. The "American Dream" has homeownership at its core. The political symbolism is also obvious. This was said of the Apartheid state and its housing policies: *Housing was about control. It was about excluding people from urban areas. It was about regimentation. It was about the administration of deprivation. (South African Minister of Housing, Joe Slovo addressing the Housing Summit, Botshabelo, 27 October 1994)*

Read more: <http://www.housingfinanceafrica.org/the-problem-is-housing/>

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# Phillip Saidi - Success and Failures of Low-Cost Post-Apartheid South Africa

*Studymode.com.* According to Tonkin (2008), low -cost housing is dwelling units whose total housing costs are deemed affordable to a group of people within a specified income range, low cost housing includes social housing and low income housing. In South Africa these houses have been provided through the Reconstruction Development Program (RDP). Since 1994, the government has been implementing this program to address the housing backlog which is continuously increasing. The post-Apartheid has era has been enlightened by different successes and failures of low cost housing. Some of the successes include provision of housing to the poor at affordable rates and failures include that it promotes continuous segregation of people in accordance with economic class and race (Tonkin, 2008). The main purpose of this paper is to identify and discuss the successes and failures of low cost housing (RDP).

## *The Successes of Low-Cost housing in Post-Apartheid*

Low cost housing has brought attention of excellence to South Africa by different countries in the world. South Africa has been classified as the world's leading country in relation to the provision of houses and its inspiration to eliminate informal settlements. Researchers have suggested that South Africa by 2011 had build-up 2 million houses for the poor. South Africa has been identified on the international arena as a country leading by example in relation to the initiatives it takes to provide low cost housing (Tonkin, 2008).

*Read more (you need to sign up):*

<http://www.studymode.com/essays/Success-And-Failures-Of-Low-Cost-Rdp-1541743.html>

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# **Annie Lowrey - Is It Crazy To Think We Can Eradicate Poverty?**

*The New York Times. April 30, 2013*

.. Since 1980, the proportion of the developing world living in urban areas has grown to about 50 percent, from 30 percent, and according to the World Bank, that migration of hundreds of millions has been instrumental in pulling down poverty rates — and will be for a broader set of countries going forward. Cities bolster access to health services and public resources; infant-mortality rates, for instance, are 40 percent lower in urban Cambodia than in rural Cambodia. And workers themselves become more productive, often by making the switch from labor-intensive work like farming to capital-intensive work like manufacturing. Urban poverty is hardly attractive — slums are cramped, unplanned, unhygienic places — but it is, in many cases, less deadly. (Except when it's not. A recent factory collapse in Bangladesh killed dozens of workers — a reminder of the sometimes-catastrophic human costs associated with rapid, unchecked urbanization and industrialization.)

*Annie Lowrey is an economics reporter for The Times.*

Read more: <http://www.nytimes.com/magazine/is-it-crazy-to-think>

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## **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>

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

[www.theguardian.com](http://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?>

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# **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/>