Domus: Intelligent Architecture for Current Times

domusweb.it. While European cities present very low demographic growth today, they have extraordinarily urban and even agriculturally built environments. Adding to these circumstances circumstances certain environmental and social sustainable values, and bearing in mind the current economical situation, you can reach the conclusion that the re-use existing built patrimony – obsolete after new and continuous social, economic and technological changes – is a need. In this context, French architects Anne Lacaton & Jean Philippe Vassal have been developing an uncommon philosophy marked by their interest in preservation and social living improvement refurbishments, very far from the professional positioning of most reknown architects. Among their recent works are projects like the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, and others like the new Architecture School of Nantes and the peripheral extension of Bois-Le-Prêtre tower in Paris.

Read more: http://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/intelligent-architecture-for-current-times/

Social Housing Watch – A Brief History of Social Housing

Why do we have social housing? What trends did it arise in response to? And how has it changed over the years? Take at look at our brief history of social housing.

1800 — 1850
Urban overcrowding

Between 1800 and 1850 the population of the UK doubled in size from 8 to 16 million people, and as the Industrial Revolution progressed more people moved

out of the countryside and into cities to find work. By 1850 over half of the UK population lived in urban areas – mostly in squalid and overcrowded slums with open sewers and no running water. With living conditions so poor and disease so widespread, life expectancy in 1830 was a mere 29. Over the next century the need for decent housing, even for the poorest in society would become an ever larger issue.

Read more: http://socialhousingwatch.co.uk/a-brief-history-of-social-housing/

Squatters Vow To Fight City Over Land

westcapenews.com – Cape Town – January, 15, 2013 – After having failed to forcibly remove families illegally occupying land in Joe Slovo Park near Milnerton, the City of Cape Town is seeking an eviction order against the approximately 218 families from the Western Cape High Court.

Attempts by the City's Anti Land Invasion Unit (ALIU) in November to forcibly remove the residents were unsuccessful as the informal settlement residents simply re-erected their shacks after they were demolished.

The residents also launched violent protests, stoning ALIU officials and burning tyres on Democracy Road — the main road in the township which leads to Montague Gardens. Several businesses run by foreign nationals were also set alight by residents who claimed they were being targeted while foreign national's running businesses illegally from shipping containers were being allowed to continue.

The city has since sought an order from the High Court to have the people evicted.

Read more: http://westcapenews.com/?p=5794

Why Habitat for Humanity is Needed

Habitat.org. **The world is experiencing a global housing crisis.**

About 1.6 billion people live in substandard housing and 100 million are homeless.(1)

Each week, more than 1 million people are born in, or move to, cities in the developing world.(2)

One billion people (32 percent of the global urban population) live in urban slums.

If no serious action were taken, the number of slum dwellers worldwide would increase over the next 30 years to nearly 2 billion.(3)

In the United States alone, 95 million people have housing problems. Including payments too large a percentage of their income, overcrowding, poor quality shelter and homelessness.(4)

Clean, decent, and stable housing provides more than just a roof over someone's head.

Stability for families and children.

Sense of dignity and pride.

Health, physical safety, and security.

Increase of educational and job prospects.

The transformational ability of good housing.

Clean, warm housing is essential for prevention and care of diseases of poverty like HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, diarrhea, and malaria.(5)

Children under five in Malawi living in Habitat for Humanity houses have 44

percent less malaria, respiratory or gastrointestinal diseases compared to children living in traditional houses.(6)

Read more: http://www.habitat.org/how/why.aspx

Gaia Vince – Slums and The Future of Cities

bbc.com – January 14, 2013 – by Gaia Vince

Such transformations are only possible when cities have strong independent governance with authority and finances to act. Urban planning and transport decisions are in many cases still managed at a national level. Many cities around the world often have little or no ability to tax citizens. It means that city councils and leaders have to beg national politicians for upgrades to sewerage, roads or changes to areas that once might have affected a few thousand people, but now affect millions.

Improvements are being made – some 230 million people have moved out of slum housing since 2000, for example. But whether the city of the Anthropocene will be environmentally sustainable depends on how places like Khulna evolve.

Read   more: http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20130114-slums-and-the-future-of-cities/3

About the author

Gaia Vince is a science writer and broadcaster who is particularly interested in how humans are transforming planet Earth and the impacts our changes are having on societies and on other species. She has visited people and places around the world in a quest to understand how we are adapting to environmental change. You can follow her adventures at www.WanderingGaia.com and on Twitter at @WanderingGaia.

Kathleen Scanlon & Christine Whitehead (Eds.) Social Housing in Europe II – A Review of Policies and Outcomes

Published by LSE London, London School of Economics and Political Science

From the Preface:

This is the second book to be produced by a multidisciplinary group of housing experts that was set up as a result of an initiative by a number of French academics
based at different Paris universities. The group was organised through
the GIS Réseau Socio-Economie de l'Habitat network, which receives support
from the PUCA (Plan Urbain Construction Amenagement, the Research Office
of the Ministry of Capital Works and Housing). Since publication of the first book,
Social Housing in Europe, the group has met three times. In November 2007 a
major international conference was organised in Paris, by the GIS. The papers
presented there, together with a great deal of further input by authors, form the
basis for this text. Since then the group has met in Vienna and in Dublin to
discuss
a range of issues core to the continued development of social housing and
will work further on issues of both principles and policy over the next year. We
are extremely grateful for all those who have supported these meetings and for
their interest in ensuring the work can continue. (…)

1. Introduction

Kathleen Scanlon, LSE London

This book is a sequel to and builds on Social Housing in Europe, published in
2007

by LSE London. That first book was descriptive, and aimed to give an overview of the
social housing sector in nine European countries, in a format accessible to the nonspecialist.
This second book explores in more depth some of the themes that
emerged from the first. Like the first book, this publication was partly funded by the
UK's Higher Education Innovation Fund, which aims to increase collaboration between universities and practitioners. (….)

Findings from Social Housing in Europe

The first book sought to give an overview of the social housing sector in (mainly western)
Europe. It contained reports prepared by housing specialists in nine European
countries. These reports followed a common framework, and generally covered
• Tenure split and the supply of social housing in each country
• Ownership of the social sector
• Involvement of the private sector in social housing
• Decision-making and rent-setting
• Access to social housing
• Provision of housing for the most vulnerable: 'very social' housing
• Demographics and ethnicity in social housing

In the countries studied – Austria, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands and Sweden—social housing as a percentage of the housing
stock ranged from a high of 35% in the Netherlands to a low of 4% (after mass privatisation)
in Hungary. In most countries this percentage had fallen over the last ten
years as the provision of social housing had not kept pace with overall building, and/or
social units were privatised or demolished. In the last decade or so many countries
had seen a revival of interest in social housing, as it offered one way for governments
to meet the increasing overall demand for housing that stems from demographic and

income pressures. So far, however, there had been no step change in the amount of
money available for construction of new social housing.
The profile of the social housing stock differed across countries, in terms of the age
of units, the housing type, and the percentage located on estates. In many countries
the problems of social housing were almost synonymous with post-war industrially
built estates.
Social housing served different client groups in different countries—in some it was a
tenure for the very poor, while in others it housed low-waged working families or even
the middle classes, while the very poor lived elsewhere. In a few countries the social
sector housed a wide range of income groups. Even so, it was generally true that the
social sector accommodated a disproportionate number of single-parent families, the
elderly and the poor.
New social housing was generally being built on mixed-tenure sites. Efforts were also
being made to introduce greater tenure and social mix into existing stock, and to use
public assets more effectively.
Several countries were exploring the potential for public/private partnership. This
could mean that private finance funded provision by traditional social owners; less
commonly, private developers themselves could become involved in operating social
housing. (…)

Full text: [Scanlon and Whitehead (eds) Social Housing in Europe II](#)