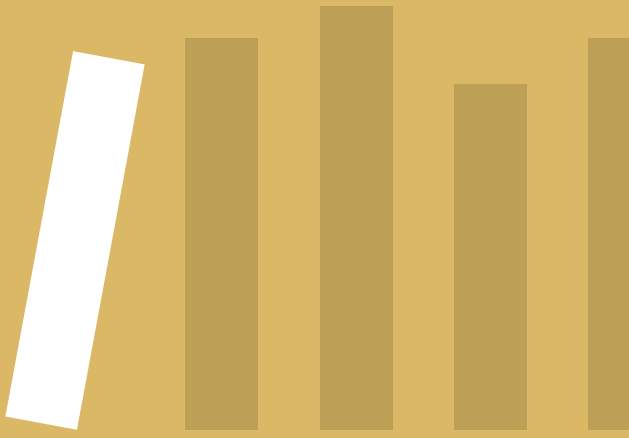
CHAIN REACTION

Do buildings damage your health?



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Compiled and edited by Alex Julyan

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FOREWORD

Alex Julyan

I started to think about architecture in the 1960s, when I was a child growing up in London. This burgeoning interest was due in large part to the influence of my father, a graphic designer and socialist, and a family friend who worked in the historic buildings division of the Greater London Council. I learned from them that buildings were architecture and that architecture could be contradictory. Whilst some kind of post-war architectural desecration was being wreaked upon the towns and cities of Britain, a brave new world of dynamic and forward-thinking design was emerging, somewhere in the middle of this landscape sat the preservationists who engaged in complex battles that are still being won and lost today. I learned that buildings could hold meanings and mean different things to different people at different times. That politics were involved, though I had no clear understanding of what one had to do with the other. As I grew up and came to live in different parts of London I acquired my own appreciation for its buildings, one that connected me to my childhood experiences of the parks, pavements and shops that had augmented my territory of home and school.

Most of us are not architects, planners or developers, yet simply by inhabiting buildings and streets we develop an expertise in and of our built environment. Our memories and emotions reside in the places we know - the structures and thoroughfares where our identity, behaviour, attitudes and relationships are forged. This is the map where our lives play out. As humans we intuit that the built environment profoundly affects the way we feel both physically and mentally, it may overwhelm us in its scale or uplift us in its beauty. Design can impact us in a

thousand discreet ways, supporting us in our aspirations and social networks, or pulling us towards decline and isolation. Understanding these impacts and articulating our feelings is a challenge, so we generally entrust this responsibility to a range of building professionals who design and advocate on our behalf.

In recent years I have been struck by the aspiration and commitment of many such professionals to deliver social good through their work, and conversely, how few individuals and communities feel they are the beneficiaries of these intentions. Lately, I have observed a movement or desire emerging from this schism, one that is politically engaged and striving to re-instate the individual, the family, the community and the environment as drivers for the delivery of progressive and effective design.

My recent conversations with architectural practitioners and members of the public have resulted in this book of essays and interviews. Four of the five authors have nominated a respected colleague to write an essay, creating a 'chain reaction' of thoughts and ideas. Together these authors call for more collective, imaginative and democratic approaches to complex local and national challenges. They lay bare the systems of policy, planning and development that are no longer fit for purpose. The testimonies of five individuals are recorded in the accompanying interviews. These are people who experience first-hand what it means to live with the consequences of good and bad decision-making. Their words are insightful, candid and at times shocking.

When architectural thought is deep, is connected and carried through with humility, it can nurture a lasting affection for the places in which we live and work. Good design can connect us to each other, offer choice and increase our life chances. As the complexities of our health needs seem to intensify daily and new global challenges unfold, it is clear that architecture must play a central role in sustaining our good health. Whether in housing, civic buildings or infrastructure projects, many architects and communities are proposing more creative and respectful approaches which transgress the norm and could transform our lives.

As you digest the ideas and reflections in the pages that follow I invite you to consider the implications of creating places that can support us all in meaningful and health-affirming ways. I hope you draw your own conclusions and imagine how you might influence the discourse, because you are after all, part of this conversation.

01

JoinedUpDesignForWellbeing

Sarah Wigglesworth

Consult the headlines of any media outlet and you'll find regular reference to the housing shortage, the problems of caring for our ageing population, the rise of obesity and alcohol consumption in the over 60's and the funding crisis in the NHS. In this depressing narrative, older people are regularly demonised as NHS bed-blockers and a drain on precious resources. Where once our elders would have been cared for by an extended family, societal change also means families have dispersed, so more older people are living alone and they are living for longer. Furthermore, the care burden often falls unfairly on women, who also carry out the majority of other housework and are quite likely to be holding down a job as well, so the traditional structure of intergenerational care is unreliable. But while Central Government has placed the ultimate responsibility for care on Local Authorities, it has simultaneously reduced funding to Councils and lower tax receipts have made it harder for them to fulfil these obligations.

Taken together, these conditions are turning our own wellbeing into a personal responsibility. At the same time we are also facing reduced living options and fewer resources. With pressure on public and private finances and the restricted availability of affordable staff to take care of us (particularly likely post-Brexit), the future looks bleak for many of us.

Old ways of managing our mental and physical health and quality of life choices are going to have to change. So in what ways can people take better care of themselves, and how can the built environment enable this?

Responsible agencies are starting to foreground personal wellbeing in all aspects of their work, beginning with instilling healthy practices for the life course in our earliest years that will assist, optimistically, a better older age. While we will all need to make improvements in the

ways we live, we urgently need a new narrative that makes the right decisions desirable. As part of this ongoing project, we need to create more cohesive, egalitarian, integrated communities whose residents live in appropriate, appealing, resilient housing that supports independence and healthy living. The built environment is the central thread binding these strands together.

The built environment matters. It is the only form of art that can't be avoided, yet, ironically, we take it for granted and often experience it with distraction or resignation. We see it as designed by others, not ourselves. In part, its very complexity is a challenge. Although purporting to be democratic, processes of development are paternalistic and policy-driven while quietly protecting the interests of land and building owners. Development is fuelled mostly by financial interests and not primarily for the benefit of the public. Local authorities that were once the former guardians of civic life have practically relinquished this role, as their ability to commission work and plan the public realm has been progressively curtailed under government cuts.

Since the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) was abolished in 2011, there exists no overarching body to safeguard the interests of a high quality civic environment. The new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was intended to speed up planning decisions through "a presumption in favour of sustainable development", meaning refusal could be countenanced only where the development could be proven as non-sustainable. What this means is highly contested and currently being interpreted every which way, and resisted with the equal and opposite force. Developers have become adept at using viability assessments to prove whatever a they desire, safeguarding their profits while they escape a duty to provide affordable housing and other badly-needed facilities such as schools and playgrounds. In the

absence of any other body, it falls to each of us, as citizens, designers, parents and the ageing, to hold those responsible for the cities, towns and landscapes we need now and in the future to deliver the kind of environment that will benefit us all.

Creating this visionary environment is going to require a concerted, collective effort. Moreover, to gain something we will all have to give up something. We need to demonstrate what the good life means so that we can all work towards it. We should all avoid nimbyism and work in favour of understanding the broader benefits of development to society. We must debate the specifics of proposals for the built environment on grounds of quality, making connections across scales while innovating new social and spatial typologies.

Here is one proposition: what if, in our towns and cities – and even some rural areas - we gave up car travel for our local journeys and started walking and cycling instead? Our children will walk or cycle to school through roads that are pollution-light and safe. This will reduce respiratory problems and help combat our increasingly sedentary lifestyles. Walking or cycling to locally-owned shops and services will keep us active as a normal part of our daily lives, embedding good habits that last a lifetime. As footfall increases and the fresh air encourages us to linger it will also help revive our high streets. If we build mixed, inter-generational communities we will live closer to where we work, making caring and socializing easier. Public transport will become more reliable and more viable. Neighbourly familiarity and participation in civic life help cement a community, breeding trust and a pronounced sense of identity. All these features contribute to feelings of belonging while promoting physical and mental health. This is a virtuous circle that will rebound on the wellbeing of us all. Importantly, to see things in this joined-up way is to think through the proposition as a designer does.

We need to start designing buildings that allow people of all ages to live well, serving their needs into their later years. Approaching the problem from the perspective of the older person would create housing suited to everyone, throughout their life course. This housing should come in all forms to suit all kinds of places, from flats in towers in inner cities to bungalows on open ground, and be within reach of any pocket. We should design for new ways of living – with flexible layouts, options to live and work simultaneously and live singly or in (non-family) groups.

Aside from encouraging the wanton squandering of resources (the building industry produces 40% of UK waste and contains huge amounts of embodied energy that will be replaced by more high-embodied energy materials), we should avoid losing our existing built heritage because it is also what characterizes our neighbourhoods and makes places unique. Every development should start by considering the retention and repurposing of existing buildings because they embody and express the place-specific identity, history and memory as well as the spatial and material quality of the made environment. Our choices of materials should ensure the least possible harm to nature and people, avoiding materials that pollute the environment, are poisonous to work with and that can't be recycled.

We need to build for good daylight, to simulate vitamin D, see clearly and to lift the spirit. We need to ensure our buildings are warm and dry and that people can control these conditions easily through their own agency. If we build airtight buildings we need to ensure they are well ventilated with fresh, unpolluted air so that they do not lead to respiratory conditions, mites and allergy-inducing particulates. Home should be a haven, a place to rest and recuperate, as well as feed the soul. It follows that we need places that connect to the natural world, with its cycles, its beauty and its investment in the future.

Above all, we need to create beauty and pleasure, valuing our environment for all the good things it brings to our wellbeing. Design has a critical role to play in helping deliver this agenda. For too long it has been a neglected part of the equation, a complex, mercurial form of knowledge that is poorly understood by policy-makers, politicians and civil servants, one whose benefits cannot always be measured by filling spreadsheets or in the siloed financial evaluations we use. Furthermore, its success depends on risk-taking, something anathema to the majority of managers and commissioners. Yet design's potential to connect disparate kinds of knowledge in a chain from idea to production, and its ability to articulate spatial and material propositions answering to complex issues places it in a unique position to propose a viable way forward. As the one thing that glues all the pieces together (regulation, data, space, material, topography, time, logistics, use) it could be the only thing capable of making a better future viable for everyone.

A Ministry of Design? Now that would be a fine thing...

01

The Interview

Josie Pearse was born in 1955 in Peckham, London. A former Family Literacy Worker she moved from her long-term privately rented accommodation into Older Women's Co-Housing [OWCH] in 2017. Founded in 1998 by six women, OWCH co-designed and built a mixed tenure complex, comprised of 25 flats and a communal space laid out around a shared garden. It is the country's first co-housing community for older women.

I was living in an Edwardian House in a ground floor flat that I'd moved into 33 years before and I liked it, I was very lucky to have controlled rent. When I moved in there I just had a room in a house. They converted it while I was living there, in some ways that was great because I got the flat, but then I didn't have access to the whole house and the people in it. There was no central heating so it let heat out and sound in; it was badly converted and very noisy.

I started thinking about moving and this was definitely about getting older. I was in my early 50s when I really knew I needed to leave. I hadn't got any equity as a renter, so I got on a council list where there were some developments planned for key workers. At that time I qualified, but then I had a burnout and crashed out of work. I think that was partly to do with housing, especially the conversion around me which was really, really stressful. It was probably that that made me start thinking: "These landlords they just don't give a monkey's about me".

I hit my 59th birthday, nothing had happened about council flats and to be honest, as a social renter I thought my options in housing were completely nothing, I had nothing and I thought I was stuck. There was a point where I realised I was already an older woman and becoming an old woman. What could I do? Someone I've known for a while was involved with a group and she was doing something interesting with housing, but I didn't really know what, I had a conversation with her and a light bulb went on. I thought "Ah!" It offered hope – hope to get out of

a difficult situation where it felt as if I was going to be in mental health trouble if I stayed. You know the landlord wanted to sell my flat for as much money as possible. In the end he did and I felt like I'd been sold as a tenant.

We are two generations living here at OWCH, the youngest person is 50 and the oldest is 88. There are women here who made the choice not to be a burden and this interested me. Even though everybody's growing old together, it's an entirely different direction of growing old than if you're stuck in a cul-de-sac in some kind of 'Brookside' for the elderly. I chose this and they chose me. There's a process here: the women here are really active in social change; they are people who have been social workers, teachers, an economist. There's a doctor, she's a former GP who had her surgery in Grenfell when it was first built. There are a lot of really fascinating women here. You know I think we all go "What am I going to do?" and then put it to one side. The difference here is that the founder members didn't put it to one side.

We're in the middle of talking about the crossover of generations and re-evaluating where we're at, because the last thing we want to do is become some kind of enclave. That's really clear in our values. People's grandchildren stay and we've got a guest suite for families. It is nice to have kids around and it's nice to have quiet. Having choices that aren't necessarily dependent on money is key to our serenity or happiness in my opinion.

We were consulted and it's a co-housing design, so it's designed for spontaneous interactions. Pollack Thomas Edwards [PTE] the architects for the co-housing were terrific and really enthusiastic. This is the thing everybody here talks about, all these 70 sometimes early 80 year old women designing their own homes and having their own input: "Yes we do want this, no we don't want that".

Councils talk about 'delivering' housing meaning: "There, there dear, we'll deliver it to you". It's all about hitting targets. I don't know anybody that wants to be 'delivered to'. Even though I had always thought of myself as assertive and able, being part of this group has made me more so. I can go to a conference with this OWCH badge on and from the back of the room put my hand up and say: "I am one of those women and I don't like the word 'deliver'. I don't want to be 'delivered to'."

The private sector is beginning to like this set-up - you know, once they see money in it! There are 8 social rent flats and 17 private, there's no difference in the architecture and we all have an equal vote. We have some former refugees here, people who are disabled, people who have lived in social and private housing and have claimed housing benefit. There are women here who probably wouldn't ever meet - women who come from a big council estate, and women who've lived in 4 bedroom houses. They all meet at communal business meetings and have gotten to know each other over the last 10 years or so. I love it. It's one of the things I really love about this place. It is kind of invisible because we look homogenous.

There's a complicated system of developers and housing associations. Everyone has to be a willing to partner because it's cooperative. If profit were the driving motive this probably wouldn't have happened. Even though this has the village community thing about it, which sounds like the idealistic past, it seems a constant in life that people need community and conversation. Where would you be without the ability to say to your neighbour, "Great weather today!?"

My men friends have been as lonely as I've been. I know they need to do stuff in the community and relate to people through doing things. In that way they're no different. Fear is the biggest barrier to getting involved. When I say fear I'm imagining myself at my worst in my 70s,

or someone not so privileged being frightened of going to a public meeting. We want to make decisions collectively and it's important to have the ability to say, "No we don't want that" and not accept what you're given, to be a bit rebellious and go against the established order. This was an idealistic project, but it had a practical plod through. There needed to be somebody, an intermediary who was interested in helping and we had a consultant working with us who could negotiate those hierarchies.

Social housing just has to lose its stigma. Put some money into public housing! That sounds like a fantasy at the moment, but I think the young will demand it as well. In my own family, in the next generation down, there's this word 'losers', and that 'winning' and 'losing' bullshit really annoys me. You don't win or lose at life you just live.

I think it sometimes feels as though there's neglect in social housing. When I was on the social housing register and looking at housing in Brent you could see the cheapness, the electric wire to a switch covered over with a plastic strip, or those horrible front doors that are impossible to break. In the place I lived in Kensal Rise, that's also what the landlord would do. Rationally I knew it was about the house, but it felt like it was about me and I didn't want to collude in my own de-valuation by staying there. I don't know what kind of clout older people have, but here at OWCH we have it. It's a platform and we can talk about this sort of thing.

This is my first experience of living in a beautifully designed space. There's thought about me as a person. A person working in housing policy wants to deliver something to a tenant rather than with them. Policies have to change, people have to stop paying lip-service to what they think the community wants, people have to really find out. A young

housing activist said to me, “Get them to come and talk to you on your territory, they need to go out and listen to people”, but practically how can they do that? Well, maybe change has to come from a group of friends getting together as they age and saying “How are we going to do this?”

Even with local councils, and people who are attracted to politics, their will is to power. Power means numbers, big numbers of product and units of housing. It's all about hitting targets. That mindset of delivering on your targets is different from this. This is really ground up and self-organising.

The groundswell is creative and in some ways I see us as class warriors!

02

A Burning House

Peg Rawes

In my job I teach architects alongside artists, historians and writers. Because we examine the impact of architecture on communities in the UK and globally today, we frequently talk about how architecture affects us physically and mentally: how our homes, streets and cities make us feel. Currently, we spend a good deal of time talking about how buildings and cities can make us feel unwell: for example, the impact on health from car emissions or from poorly-insulated housing that can lead to respiratory illnesses; or a decline in mental health, and increased levels of stress, anxiety and depression that can build up from high exposure to noise, or from insecure and overcrowded housing. Societal wellbeing is directly linked to the design of our built environment.

Rather than using scientific sets of data to explore this, we often use historical work by artists or writers to explore what we value in our communities and environment. Recently, I've been writing about the Jewish philosopher Spinoza who lived in the Netherlands in the 17th century. Spinoza said that an ethical society respects the different wellbeing needs of its citizens. He shows that when society enables us to look after ourselves well in our communities, both we and society flourish. He writes that wellbeing is a social concern of care for ourselves, extending as a duty of care from society to the individual (what he calls community, but might also be welfare or charity). Wellbeing includes our capacity to live well in our homes, but also in our interactions with others in the public sphere or urban realm, and in our economic and political agency. However, in the UK today instead of wellbeing being unquestionably improved by our advanced capitalist democracy, there is serious concern that it is in decline because of inequalities in income, work, health and housing security. Indeed, the likelihood of being housed well in the UK is now not the reality for many, leading some to suggest that our social contract to provide safe housing has broken down to unacceptable, some would say inhumane levels.

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It is only in the burning house that the fundamental architectural problem becomes visible for the first time. Art, at the furthest point of its destiny, makes visible its original project.

– Giorgio Agamben, The Man Without Content (1999)

A ‘house in flames’

A colleague, Camillo, gave me his book to read. The book, An Ethics of a Potential Urbanism (2017) considers Agamben’s political writings on art, architecture and society. It contains this image of a house on fire. I happened to read it a week after the Grenfell Tower fire. The words in this quotation vibrated and blurred as I read them alongside long days of being immersed in the images, reports, films and voices of the Grenfell community’s physical distress. I met Camillo and we talked about the image’s power to capture the pain of Grenfell and about the lack of care that the Grenfell community has experienced. Now, a month after the community’s horrific loss of home and family, the pain is even more visible in the faces of the residents, and the police confirm there is evidence of neglect. This is summed up most viscerally, yet also legally, in the phrase ‘duty of care’: words that point to the systematic and avoidable decline in housing welfare in British society over the past 40 years, and at the root of Grenfell’s appalling loss of life.

The boarding house

I’m looking at a group of ink drawings, which are distinctive partly because they are an unusual red-ochre ink on tracing paper that is torn and creased, with smatterings of mildew across them. Fragile, they date from the late 1930s and have titles that describe passing domestic

moments: ‘Breakfast at Ranelagh Avenue with Mrs Chubb and her cat’, ‘9.30 a.m. at Ranelagh Avenue’, ‘Discussing a new flat at 1.00 a.m. at Ranelagh Avenue’. They show the small shared domestic space of a bedsit or a boarding house for a group of young men and remind me of, Colm Tóibín’s writing about boarding houses in New York.

I am also struck by their prescience of the housing that many students and young professionals experience today. The drawings don’t suggest that sharing this kitchen, bathroom or bedroom in southwest London was particularly stressful, but the space is cramped and the drawings emphasise the proximity of bodies and daily activities inside the home. Today, there is again increased likelihood of sharing living space if you are young or on a low income. However now it is also more likely to be overcrowded, overpriced and insecure because there is insufficient affordable housing, rents are unregulated and unscrupulous landlords take advantage of the rental and housing markets as financial assets for generating income. Some of the most vulnerable to overcrowding in substandard housing are young families who rely on precarious zero-hours contracts, migrant workers or students with loans and low-paid jobs.

These images also preview ‘co-living’ accommodation, one of the most aspirational forms of housing markets, in which tiny overpriced bedroom units in residential blocks are leased out to young ‘mobile’ professionals under the myth of networked life akin to social media communities. Rather than being built amidst ‘the beating heart’ of a digital capital, one of these ‘collectives’ is on a non-descript road, next to a light industrial area north of the A40, under a mile away from a much-criticised new student accommodation ‘hub’. The real commercial design of wellbeing for the young is even more explicit here with students living adjacent to self-storage and mailbox blocks. For all the purported aspirations of a worry-free lifestyle, transported from Silicon Valley or Dumbo in

Brooklyn, co-living is more in keeping with the interwar boarding house: being young and in your 20s, still means temporary housing, but now with high rents and reduced financial and housing security.

Homes for the elderly

Architect, Sarah Wigglesworth's research council funded project, DWELL, presents innovative flexible housing design for older generations, through a pioneering co-design process with residents in Sheffield. Their 2016 publication, Designing with Downsizers shows that retired people and older people with mobility and health issues share very similar housing values to other generations, including homes which can be adapted for different life needs, apartments with good access, security and in mixed-age community locations, good access to outdoor spaces including gardens, roof terraces, balconies and allotments. Above all, their priority is adaptable homes that provide secure long-term wellbeing.

In a guide that is particularly useful for organisations who are responsible for affordable and social housing provision, traditional bungalow typologies are updated into contemporary settings and size – sheltered courtyards, multi-generational housing mixes, and hillside arrangements. It also shows the potential for less-obvious types of living for these sectors – mid-rise apartments within mixed communities and, well-managed and high quality high-rise living in more densely occupied urban areas. This convincing argument for co-design shows that this marginalized social group's wellbeing can be designed into housing, to their benefit and a cross-generational society.

Shelter

Deborah Garvie, a Senior Policy Advisor at Shelter, draws attention to the importance of housing for the different inter-generational rhythms

and patterns of use within a modern home: for example, pram, bike and wheelchair storage are key indicators of what home means today. Alongside research by charities, such as the Rowntree Trust who specialise in researching poverty, Shelter's 2013 report, Little Boxes, Fewer Homes highlights that poor housing welfare still most critically affects those who have least social and economic autonomy and are most in need of societal support. In the past 10 years, these charities have found alarming increases in mental and physical health-related problems in UK households including asthma and depression, partly resulting from overcrowded and poor quality housing. In addition, in 2010 the Building Research Establishment (who undertook the fire tests on the Grenfell cladding) observed that the cost to the NHS of overcrowding resulting from poor housing was £21,815,546 per year (The Real Cost of Poor Housing).

These reports also show unsustainable levels of housing insecurity in groups previously considered secure (e.g. young middle-class families and professionals). Together, poor quality housing built by a few large developers, poor maintenance of social housing stock, the regeneration of council housing as assets on international global markets and steep rises in unregulated rents, have combined to produce a disastrously dysfunctional housing situation.

Depressingly, Shelter and like-minded charities, community housing supporters and journalists present compelling evidence that our current economic and political management of society is far more beneficial to those who use housing for profit over and above the benefit of providing secure and affordable homes, especially for those with lower levels of social, political and economic power, such as the young, elderly or vulnerable.

Affects

Wellbeing – the capacity to flourish as an individual and societally – is thoroughly framed by the management of our biological, social and political lives. Housing is intimately connected to 'feeling well' or 'feeling unwell'. Affects are physical and psychological symptoms of when we flourish and when we do not, when we are comfortable, or when we are ill at ease (dis-ease). Spinoza suggests that our emotions are affective powers for change, not just factless feelings, but the way we reason and determine our lives. We might call the figures of housing outlined above – Grenfell, the boarding house, DWELL and Shelter – examples of 'architectures of care'. Given that good really affordable housing is still not available to many in Britain today, affects are therefore critical tools for designing wellbeing into housing: and an ability to understand pain is needed by us all, especially those who have political and economic responsibility for housing welfare.

02

The Interview

Tomassina Hessel is 31 and was born in Germany. She came to London as a child and moved into social housing with her family. As a young adult she lived happily in hostels and temporary accommodation. She eventually moved into a council owned studio flat in Notting Hill and had a son in 2014.

Her home is in a low level 1970's block adjacent to the Grenfell tower, which was engulfed by fire on 14th June 2017. Since then she has become vice-chair of Lancaster West Estate. Five months on from the Grenfell fire she is living in one room in a hotel with her son. Her housing future is uncertain.

I got my permanent accommodation granted by the council in 2008, the studio flat in Lancaster West Estate. I didn't really want it, because I saw very quickly that there was only one space for either a cooker or a washing machine. I doubt my building was being occupied in the way the architect had imagined because the initial estate was very open, you could walk from each part of the estate onto the next without a key. Then they closed it all off, they built walls to partition the 3 blocks, they put in doors with fobs. It rained into the walkways, so they covered it with a glass roof. People had access to the roof and you could hear them running about trying to break into people's flats. Some people complain about the noise, which ironically is now worse. I think they did it all in the name of security, but the problem was already there – they didn't actually resolve the issue.

It's partitioned the community, I've got neighbours who grew up on the estate and would be up and down the entire walkway knocking on doors. One of my neighbours who's an elder used to open up and cook for all of the kids and they'd all be at each other's houses, it was more like a street. We used to have the ramp going up into the blocks, that's been taken away now since the fire. We don't have an intercom either, so if someone wants to visit me they'd have to call me and I'd have to walk all the way out of the building to let them in. If you're an elderly person or mother with a baby it's very difficult. Most of my neighbours are elderly and they have to walk up what used to be a ramp and then steps and is now 60 steps in total, no lifts.

In terms of managed decline there are decision makers and they don't inform us and say "Oh we're slowly letting it go", but you can actually see it.

You hear noises in the pipes, my neighbour says it vibrates so hard the kitchen tap shakes and she's scared it's going to come loose. In my bathroom they haven't encased anything, you just see loads of pipes, it's all exposed, plus I have pipes running through that have nothing to do with my flat. They put insulation into the walls and that pushed out all the cockroaches, my neighbour has mice I have cockroaches (laughs). At the moment we can't put rubbish in the chute, which goes down, the basement is inaccessible so now we've got a real fruit fly issue as well.

There's asbestos in the ceiling in my flat. When I moved in they'd taken all the tiles off the floor, to take out all the asbestos. The workman came accompanying my housing officer and I said "Look I'm concerned about this asbestos issue" and he said "Oh don't worry the amount you'd have to ingest you'd actually have to gather up a whole line of dust and snort it". There's still stuff in the ceiling and because the leak that came from the roof terrace breached the ceiling, I was living in there with my son and I had to kick up such a fuss to get them to have it fixed. They put the meter on the windowsill and registered very little asbestos in the air, I mean the windows were open and he said, "Don't shut them". He made it sound like it would affect the test; I should have known it's not going to be as concentrated as it actually is. It looks to me in hindsight that they were trying to cover themselves.

My housing situation did have an impact on morale, on emotional wellbeing. The way I feel now, living here [in the hotel] is like a disease, I feel on edge all the time, I don't feel settled, unfortunately it's not much different from where I was. In terms of going back it's not only the fire, it's because the fire has brought up all these issues I can't turn a blind eye.

Have you seen a film called 'Dispossession: The Housing Crisis'? It was finalised just before Grenfell happened. We were invited as Grenfell residents. Before Grenfell happened we would have watched it and thought, "Oh my god, this is awful", but since Grenfell happened they [the council] have barely touched on the issues and the implications of gentrification and regeneration. Basically what it means is they come with their plans ready and they deliver them to you and say, "Look, we're going to do this in your area, this is going to benefit you in this way and that way", but the problem is that by the time they've achieved that new layer you've already been displaced and the chances of you affording to come back are remote. What they are offering and selling to you isn't actually for you, you're never going to see it or benefit from it.

One of our neighbours went to the consultation and the plans showed they were going to have the new school where it now is. The problem with that is that Station Walk as it's called used to run all the way through to Lancaster Rd. That was also an entrance for fire engines and ambulances. Our neighbour said, "Will you refuse any retrospective planning applications?" He did guarantee that Station Walk would remain – and technically it has, but they've diverted it and changed the route. It meant the fire engines couldn't get down to the fire and to the tower.

We've had issues with the gas pipes in the past, if you saw the fire in Grenfell tower you would have seen blue flames and if you notice on the side where the fire exit was there was a straight line of fire, that was actually a gas pipe leading in. That's what they built externally to connect all the boilers that they'd fitted – on the fire escape and they didn't encase it. What they didn't account for was that the fire would be so hot that the pipe would breach, which is what happened. The fire escape was unusable, it was enclosed, there was no way for the smoke to escape, people were dying in there.

Now because we've got exposed gas pipes and the walkways are longer than the tower is tall, we're worried. If these gas pipes breach, what would happen? They've put little strips of yellow tape along the pipes to let us know its gas in the pipes. We knew they were gas pipes, we're saying they're exposed, which is a safety concern for us. What they did in the tower on the day [of the fire] is shut down the gas. The National Grid did that, but the location at which they did that was so far away that there was 24 hours worth of gas left to burn out and that included the gas in my walkways. Even now, when they want to do plumbing and gas work it's going to be external; they're not going to go into the buildings. They're essentially going to shut off what exists and re-create it new, it will be external and ugly.

I told my son when we left the house recently; I said, "We can't go back". We've actually fought for the building and got a guarantee that it won't be demolished for 25 years, but it was on a managed decline for sure, we know that. They never admitted it to us. There was a period where my reservations about going home were probably less to do with the tower and more to do with the fact that the flat itself is inadequate for my needs. As time goes on I'm less and less inclined to go back onto the estate because of all these other issues that have come up about the gas works, the plumbing, the pest control, the long-term plans of the estate. Even people who are fighting to stay there, within 25 years could be moved.

It's very similar to private rental in a way, because if you have a landlord it's the same insecurity, the difference being you're a lot more respected as an individual. A private landlord will only neglect you to a certain point before they're intimidated and afraid of legal action. In social housing you have the same rights by law, but the council are masters at covering their tracks and are really intimidating and make you feel irrelevant. You don't have a leg to stand on, you're sub-human. It's an issue of dignity.

You're made to feel that you've been given this flat – you don't have any rights.

Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) are generally organisations run by the community, it's the management of the estate by the tenants. Kensington and Chelsea council has 10,000 properties, it's so large they created a TMO, but rather than it being tenant led, it was literally an arms-length organisation and they're trying to deny that. The people that run the TMO are closely affiliated with people in the council, one high profile individual stepped down, he didn't resign he was still on payroll; he was still affiliated with the council and he was preserved so that he could take part in the enquiry, which is all very dodgy. Our MP Emma Dent Coad has been there with us, she's outstanding, and we love her.

What I want is a revision of social housing policy. I want empowered communities, I want people to become more engaged, take more responsibility for their own future and I want the government to support them in that. Because of miscommunication and misperceptions they're afraid of empowering communities, they're afraid that they'll lose power and they don't actually believe we're capable.

I've found myself really passionate about fighting for what's right; I'm preparing myself to be more effective. At the moment there are a lot of grassroots organisations, we're starting to try and work together and there's a lot of opportunity. The problem is this is at a point where we need intervention, we need people to support individuals to develop other skills – how to use that voice, how to become solution orientated. At the moment a lot of people have a voice, but they're problem orientated, they're victims, it's a cycle and you literally have to have an intervention to step off it. Everyone is traumatised.

We have this window of opportunity to take matters into our own hands and the moment will pass if we don't take it. Let's become the solution. That requires responsibility, commitment, time energy and resources. That's a big thing when you're struggling in your day-to-day life anyway. A lot of successful people live on a longer-term basis, but most of us live on a day-to-day basis.

There's this conflict between people wanting the government to come and save the day versus wanting to take charge because you don't like the government. Both sides need to find common ground. The government need to open their eyes to the fact that they are not qualified to understand. People like politicians, in that elected role have chosen to take that responsibility, therefore they have a duty to humble themselves and connect to the people, whereas a lot of them aren't doing that.

We need social housing policy reviewed and we need investment in it. The type of housing that is built needs to be for families, communities are being broken down and it begs the question: "Are they doing this on purpose – is it designed to disempower people?" When you design communities and architecture that impacts communities negatively you have to ask: "Why are you doing that, How do you think that's serving the people?"

Ultimately, what they're doing is focusing on money rather than humanity. It's really counter-productive.

Before the fire I had a vague awareness that there were all these issues, now I'm a lot more clued up, I've built amazing networks in different sectors: in politics, legal, campaigning across housing, mental health, immigration... I have physical and financial resources, now I feel empowered to just coordinate. In the past, the task was so daunting

that I chose wilful ignorance. The only way that you can ensure that the outcome is something you want is to be involved and I think more and more of us need to start taking that responsibility.

People have emotions as a response to their environment and their perception of their environment. If you're emotionally charged those aren't constant, so you need to have anchors that are consistent, to have a long-term impact. I think the government knows that, that's how they operate. Whilst it's difficult to accept because as I say, my initial response is that emotions are relevant to the debate, the way the government operate – no they're not. I'm privileged because I get to sit at that table and really see what's going on, to have a better understanding and hopefully have some impact. I've sat at a table with a representative of central government who kept saying: "We have to define demands and common ground and we have to keep emotion out of it". But, I think it would be an important, goodwill gesture for the government to show their humanity by accepting some emotions. Cry with us, feel our pain.

We recognise that this is a potential blueprint that can be rolled out to the rest of the country. There is a need to position yourself on the left; it's about having that counterforce, we're in a culture of instant gratification and we've lost sight of the harvesting process.

Austerity is a lie. There are people out there who are planting seeds and they are going to be manifest later.

03

Hope in the Home

Mellis Haward

Rising house prices in London are forcing people to move out of the city, breaking up communities and endangering social inclusion. A 2013 survey by ComRes found that 52% of Londoners feel lonely, making London the loneliest place in the UK.

With strong local communities being so central to combating loneliness, how can architects and developers respond to this growing problem?

A common myth purports that it is predominantly the elderly who suffer from loneliness, but studies show that especially in large cities like London, loneliness affects many more of us than previously understood. From young people and married partners, to single people and recent immigrants, no demographic is immune. A report by The Lonely Society, commissioned by the Mental Health Foundation in 2010, revealed that 60 per cent of those aged 18 to 34 spoke of often feeling lonely.

Social loneliness is distinct from emotional loneliness. Where emotional loneliness may relate to loss of a loved one, or the end of a relationship, social loneliness can exist even where an individual is not physically isolated. Social loneliness is most prevalent at times of a change in circumstance or transition in life, such as retirement, moving house, illness, loss of mobility, or a new baby.

Loneliness has been demonstrated to pose a threat to both physical and emotional health; it can affect behaviour negatively, and weakens a sense of identity. The Red Cross reports that 92% of people who experience loneliness are scared to admit this, the stigma of shame associated with loneliness makes it a hard social issue to reach out to and solve.

Another commonly held belief is that communities were stronger in the past, with large families living together, children playing in the street and neighbours talking over fences. Perhaps these examples hold some truth? Studies show that the percentage of UK households occupied by one person doubled between 1972 and 2008, with a knock-on effect of greater individual seclusion. Rising house prices also impact directly on existing communities, by creating an increased proportion of smaller, single occupant homes. These challenges are exacerbated by government cuts in social services support for housebound and isolated individuals. It is in this climate that we need to create housing and places that encourage a communal and supportive society, and to look for solutions that help combat these issues.

Anecdotal evidence tells of neighbours in new-build housing who've never met despite living beside each other for years, this highlights the difficulty of creating strong communities quickly. Support networks take time to develop, the physical design of housing can encourage this in so many ways: generous communal spaces encourage conversation, play spaces support children and active pedestrian routes foster social cohesion.

The real challenge is the developer who in the first instance needs to have the ambition to create a place that is rooted in the existing history of each neighbourhood and a desire to encourage neighbourly interactions and social support. Without the ambition to create strong communities building housing just becomes the creation of boxes for people to live in, thereby exacerbating the problem of loneliness.

The Community Land Trust and Co-Housing models of housing development offer inspirational ways to create a strong community from scratch. They also pose a fundamental disruption to the existing

housing market by creating homes, not investments. CLTs are not-for-profit community-based organisations delivering housing that addresses a need in the local area. They do this by holding the land in trust, separating its value from that of the building that stands upon it and leasing it to home owners on long leases, or letting it out at an affordable rent. Importantly, CLTs develop houses whose sale price is proportional to local salaries, not to market prices. At London CLT's East London housing scheme, the homes are sold at approximately one third of their open market value, these homes are then held in trust and cannot ever be sold at market rate, thereby remaining affordable in perpetuity.

Part of LCLT's allocation process for the homes is a demonstration that the applicant has had a strong connection to the local area for a minimum of 5 years. This ensures that these homes will reinforce the existing community by allowing those who would normally be priced out of their local area, to stay. These houses fundamentally offer hope in the form of financial security for those that can't afford 'normal' housing; they support people with a connection to the local area, reinforce existing communities, and strengthen existing support groups. Understanding that a connection to the neighbourhood is critical in combatting loneliness, at their South London Site Lewisham Citizens and London Community Land Trust have been committed to engaging with local people throughout the development process.

Being listened to and having influence are factors that give people a sense of identity and purpose, by making residents feel more connected and useful within their community they are less likely to be lonely and socially isolated. Through community design days, school workshops and the formation of a local steering group, LCLT's engagement process genuinely edifies the community. LCLT even gave the selection of the architect for their site in Lewisham to the local community, empowering the residents with real choice. In addition, LCLT formed a strong

community of residents through a process of 'self-finish' homes, this was also realised at the Bristol CLT Fishpond Road project, where tenants were given a choice of finishes, rather than paying for generic kitchens and paint colours. By using 'sweat equity', to exchange time spent on DIY tasks to complete their homes individual skills were shared and a community was formed.

In their report 'Rewarding Social Connections Promote Successful Ageing' researchers at the University of Chicago, illustrate that for the elderly feeling lonely increased the risk of heart attacks, dementia and depression; it could disrupt sleep, raise blood pressure and lower the immune system. Those who felt isolated from others were 14 per cent more likely to have an early death.

By contrast, strong links to neighbours and community can have a huge impact on the wellbeing of elderly people. At the 'OWCH' Older Women's Co-Housing development in Barnet residents are benefiting from having 'built their own community'. Cohousing is a housing development that benefits from common facilities shared with neighbours, these co-operative neighbourhoods are designed to encourage both social contact and individual space, and are organised, planned and managed by the residents themselves. The co-housing model is particularly successful with elderly residents, who are naturally more likely to live alone and therefore benefit from sharing common facilities. At OWCH the private homes have been designed to contain all the conventional features, but residents also have access to a common house with shared facilities. Some communal meals and activities are organised, but residents say that it's mostly the physical proximity and shared values of the tenants that create a sense of neighbourliness. The group was set up to create a democratic community that protected privacy but also tackles loneliness through housing design.

If homes are made with rather than for a community, architects will be better placed to understand and respond to its specific needs. Engaged architects and developers can demonstrate the value of learning from a community through the design and allocation process and create homes, places and neighbourhoods that are cohesive.

These disruptive housing models demonstrate hope for many who live alone and can no longer afford to live in their existing communities. This process is galvanising and edifying for all those involved and, if implemented extensively, can ultimately reduce the blight of urban social loneliness.

03

The interview

Ruman Ahmed is 31-year-old freelance business analyst. He currently lives with his wife and two young children in a two bedroom flat in St Clements, Mile End. Constructed in 1848, the building was originally designed as a workhouse and in 1968 it became part of the London Hospital Mental Health facility. It was re-developed in 2007 to become London's first Community Land Trust Development.

Living with my parents when I was first married was both a cultural choice as much as a financial choice. Also, I wanted to look after my parents. People are open to moving their parents out because of a lack of space, they're working stupid hours and they just can't take care of them. I definitely think this is increasing people's sense of isolation. I know that in my parents flat things are more isolated now.

I also realised when my wife moved in it that wasn't easy for her to mix in with another family. She found it difficult because she didn't feel any of that space was hers. So she almost receded backwards into our room because that's the only space that she had. That room became her prison. I think it became most apparent when she went on maternity leave and was at home without me. That's when she made her room almost like a secure prison. So, I thought, "We need a bit more privacy in our room, OK I'll get a lock", but this wasn't working and that's when I realised it didn't matter what I did, we just had to move out.

She told me that she'd never appreciated the garden at her parents. She'd never actually been to the bottom of the garden, but the fact was that it always there was important – you could see the space when you looked out. In my room at my parents you look out the window and only see the side of the block next door, just yellow bricks. It's a window but it doesn't look out onto anything! I think an open space like a garden, whether it's shared or it's your own private space, makes a massive difference to how comfortable you are.

My Dad migrated to Britain in the 1960s. He worked in the old cotton mills in Oldham and in those days housing wasn't an issue. He told me houses were as cheap as chips in those days! After he moved out of Oldham he went back to Bangladesh, got married and came back to London. Eventually they moved to the Burner Estate, Tower Hamlets and I was born at that time. The way the Burner Estate was made was with lots of space. There was the old garden, the football pitch, and a space that wasn't accessible, but it was still an open space connected to the old Bishop Challoner Girls School. There was a lot of open space for people to walk around in on that estate. The houses weren't up against each other and the way it was designed didn't look like someone had tried to be as economical as they could get away with. It definitely looked as though it was thought out and designed for people to live in.

It's actually one of the nicer estates in Tower Hamlets, or it was until very recently when the council did something very sneaky. Just before I left, the council sold off the entire open space to a private developer! I laugh, but it's not funny because we had consultations with the council and they asked us, "What do you think about our plans?" And it wasn't like a few people thought this was a good idea- it was 100% "We don't want this!" I'm not exaggerating - everyone! Unless you were insane you would say, "This is a bad idea, you can't just get rid of the entire open space". So we had the consultation but at the end of it they told us, "Well, we've actually sold it off already".

In my own mind I had to re-balance my head. How fair are people in power actually? It's made me realise no, they're not fair. If there's an opportunity like this they'll take it. I think it's short-term thinking because now there's no open space for people. I could not believe the council could do something like that. It never occurred to me that someone like the council would take a decision like that after talking to us. I just feel that those open spaces are maybe not sacred, but certainly

protected spaces. You instinctively realise the value of those spaces to the community, right? I'm sure the council isn't ignorant of all the health studies, but being informed on all of that, and STILL making the decision to sell off the land to bring in more revenue? That was a seminal moment in my thinking. If the council are willing to do something like that, how much more cynical could local and national governments be?

I got lucky enough to live in St Clements through the London Community Land Trust scheme. The CLT have a mission to make affordable houses. There were various criteria you had to have and one is connections in the area, the other is living with people who are committed to being active in the local community and also people who fit within a specific income band. It's a lovely space on the ground floor, and very airy with windows on both sides. You hear of your friends and generally how tough it is to live in London, so of course you feel privileged living here.

Without a doubt design can encourage us to come together. I just feel in the world that we live in especially in London, everything just revolves around money. I'm very cynical; I feel it's all about money. If a place gets built the first consideration for the developer is how much money can be made out of this place? We didn't have a table at my parents, because we didn't have the space for it. If you create that space that allows a family to have a table there's an extra cost to creating that space. Is a developer willing to swallow that? Or is he going to pass it on to the end purchaser? It's absolutely insane.

I look back and I feel like in Sylhet there was so much open space and so much interaction with people. There's a thing, like an open space in Bangladeshi communities, normally it would be hardened clay like a forecourt you could come out onto and that's where life happened. I also went to University College London in Bloomsbury, with all of these beautiful squares. It's such a nice communal area to be in.

I feel like it's a shared responsibility. We have to make sure that we plan out our spaces with a view that we all have to live there, not just pile them up on top of each other. I feel like the role of a local or national government is precisely those kinds of things. Greed can potentially skew how people might think and it's the responsibility of an organisation that's not driven by greed to make sane decisions. Green space is something that human beings need and without it people go crazy. You get all sorts of issues: social delinquency, depression, etc. People definitely need to be close to some open space to be healthy. Working through that logic then surely it's the responsibility for everyone to keep that at the top of their minds when they design and are planning places.

One thing that strikes me is that this place [London] is going to be very expensive and have places that you probably wouldn't want to live in. I went to Wembley a few months ago, and there are massive flat pack tower blocks right up against each other. I'm sure they're being sold off as high quality apartments, but who would want to live like that? It feels really imposing. The spaces felt like a repeating module, not like someone decided to design the whole thing. I'm speculating, but I think those are the kind of places people have because they just need a place to go in the evening, I wouldn't describe it as a home. I think most people would describe it as an investment.

At the St Clements CLT Calum Green is the guy who originally had the vision of creating genuinely affordable social housing on the site. He wanted it to be a very communal space and to make sure there were routes through the entire site so that it's all connected to the wider community. It becomes less secure potentially, but it's a risk worth taking. Isolation is just not how human beings naturally are. Calum's original vision was that it was going to be completely social housing, but the private developer somehow managed to gazump the CLT. Boris Johnson was the Mayor at that time and was 'generous' enough to throw

a few crumbs to the CLT and say “OK you can have 24 houses on this site”, and I was one of the lucky people. Originally all 200 homes were going to be social housing.

There’s the John Langdon building right at the front of the site, the plan was for that building to become a social space. What’s happened now is we think the developer is struggling to turn as much of a profit as he originally planned. A couple of the buildings on site are listed and because of that it’s been much more expensive for them to redevelop. So that space, which we previously thought we’d get for free now, seems they’re trying to charge millions for. That’s a bit of a shocker. That space is really important because without it the site is just lots of apartments where people go at night to sleep and remain isolated. Everyone believes firmly that it’s a good space and should stay that way. When it was a mental institute the space is where a lot of people who stayed at the hospital would go to learn and read and write poetry. If something like that happened there, that’s an amazing thing, why would you take that away? Calum said one of the things he would have wanted to happen is that those people could be invited back to have their sessions there. That’s absolutely the right thing to do.

This is definitely a case of what makes decent, moral sense, versus the profit motive. We need to take that birds-eye view. Ultimately everyone in their best imagination of themselves would have empathy for their fellow man. I feel like when you go to Europe you see a lot of that. You see houses that look like they’ve been built in a way where they’re quite communal. It feels like London is having that drained out of it because of money.

04

The Delivery Gap

Hilary Satchwell

We all know that healthy buildings, places and spaces are going to be better for us. We all know that places that are nice to walk around, that are attractive, that feel safe, that are good for the old, the young and the less able; that include good landscape and public realm are where we want to spend more time.

So why isn't this what we create?

Why don't we deliver healthy buildings and places even though it is very clear to most of us that it is possible? The built environment can make a real difference in terms of both our physical and mental wellbeing. If we invest in people first and use architecture as the 'delivery' vehicle then we can be more certain that the outcomes we get will sustain and support us. Very few architects or designers knowingly create places that cause social exclusion, loneliness, or physical inactivity, but somehow we allow decisions to be made and projects to be delivered where this is the inevitable and evident consequence.

This 'wellbeing delivery gap' is the difference between a built environment that makes us healthier and happier and a world where 'others' decide for us, through the delivery of buildings and places that do not do this. If we can find better ways of closing this 'gap' it will lead us to feel less lonely, more included, less sedentary and more physically and mentally healthy. In turn we will feel more able to support each other and more economically and socially included.

Architects, designers and clients have not purposefully or destructively gone about making places that make us unhealthy – creating housing that is damp, making buildings that have to be demolished within 50 years, or making it a challenge to walk our kids to school. But we have. These are the unintended consequences of bad decision-making: poor

strategy, a lack of good urban design, and a distorted view of safety from a transport perspective. Most important of all, this demonstrates a failure to put people at the heart of place making.

It's not even about intensity or density either, as some will argue. It's not in itself about a challenge for space. Typically, and often surprisingly to many, happiness indices report that denser developments lead to people feeling happier because of better access to services facilities and interaction with neighbours. What increased densities mean is that the impacts of the decisions architects and clients make are bigger and even more complex. Problems, once created are harder to unpick, so it becomes even more critical to get things right first time. Increased densities without an investment in wellbeing pit cars and safety, against people, against activity, against walking, against stopping and against chatting with neighbours and acquaintances.

Collecting evidence on what makes us well and happy

One of the reasons built environment professionals end up designing and delivering places and buildings that are bad or unsuitable for our combined wellbeing is that we don't really collect or share the evidence that confirms what works and what doesn't. This lack of quantitative evidence means that large swathes of those working in the built environment don't have the information to think outside of their own experience, to make informed decisions based on what will make us collectively and individually most well, most happy and best able to share our spaces and places with others.

We know that exercise makes us fitter and happier, we know that places that make informal social interactions easy make us feel less lonely, but we don't always make sure we design these things into our towns and cities. When we do, the broken chain of decisions made by an ever-

changing list of people gradually removes many of the positive things that make it into the early stages of a project. Delivering evidenced based, wellbeing focussed projects requires working beyond land ownership, solving problems collectively, and having the power and the will to prioritise impacts on people throughout the decision making process.

What levels of daylight in buildings and landscape outside of our homes makes us happiest and which physical characteristics of place make us healthier? Which arrangements of front doors make us get on better with each other and have we mistaken apparent efficiency for good design? What makes a more inclusive and less challenging physical environment?

Wellbeing cannot be addressed by simply making decisions based on short-term financial considerations. This approach leaves wider and long term impacts to be paid for separately and indirectly, through taxation and increased NHS and social care budgets. This is about making decisions that prioritise healthy living: inclusion, economic sustainability, and community cohesion. It is about deciding to allocate some of the money we already spend towards a more preventative approach.

By facilitating these different approaches outside of standard market-led delivery models we can avoid oversimplified proposals for just 'living' and 'working' and start to accommodate difference. By establishing 'space' in the built environment for ideas that don't support a simple demonstrable business case, we can make provision for the not-for-

profit, the creative, and the messy. We can also design to encourage a sense of delight. To do this we must engage with the specific evidence and research, and prioritise this within our decision-making systems.

Why is good decision making so challenging?

As architects we need to see beyond the physical structures into the organisational structures: the design and delivery process, the project handover and on-going management and maintenance. We also need to observe the way buildings and places actually function together for us to support how we want to live. We need a different lens, through which we can observe how every single decision that is made could lead to more joined up, inclusive and flexible places, and in turn create places where we really want to spend time. We need to see how short-term trade-offs impact on our physical and mental health and to value these impacts differently.

This is about hundreds of tiny decisions. Decisions currently interpreted to mean that the definition of what is 'sustainable development' is very narrowly drawn. Currently, social sustainability is not really given any weight at all in decision-making and building economics is primarily about short-term gain.

At each stage of the decision-making process whether designing or delivering a building or space or place, we as a society have a choice: whether to prioritise wellbeing or not. We can decide to link those two awkward streets that get people to the station and create a more direct bus route; we can choose to create a generous lobby area where people can stop and chat; and we can make a home with good levels of light, storage and in-built flexibility that is well ventilated, safe and cheap to heat. We can also decide to proactively support a wider range of housing

(and living) models including co-housing and community land trusts. In addition, we must really think about providing a range of spaces that make young people feel included, so that they can help us properly shape the future of how we all live.

It seems evident that unless forced to do so the collective of built environment professionals, clients and regulators just don't make these 'good' decisions when it comes to delivery on the ground.

Buildings today are highly complex technological jigsaws that have to navigate an ever-changing maze of standards, rules and regulations. By constantly passing on the risk to others in terms of how these things are solved, architects and their clients have also given away any say in the myriad of choices or problems that are being tackled. Architects and planners are just two elements of a much larger jigsaw, but they mustn't assume they have no influence against powerful market demands. As professionals we need to focus on how we communicate the wellbeing needs we are trying to solve and make sure we don't fall into the trap of thinking these issues are self- evident to those around us. There are examples of great buildings that focus on high quality wellbeing outcomes. These are generally simpler, single-issue buildings that work hard in terms of how they perform and make people feel and interact. Some of the best examples include Maggie Keswick Jencks and Charles Jencks' 'Maggie's cancer care Centres', Ralph Erskine's housing projects, and the offices and housing of Herman Hertzberger.

The way to change how we make decisions in favour of wellbeing is to refocus all of our choices – big and small, around a clearly prioritised decision making framework that focuses on these human outcomes. If, for example, we want to provide well-designed places that support good health then factors that improve choice need to be prioritised.

Because of the complex and life changing implications that development has we also need to be careful how we listen and engage people in the process of designing and delivering new places – to build participation and cooperation.

Most of all this is about putting people back at the heart of everything we do.

04

The Interview

John Slyce is a writer and critic. Born in the USA in 1964 he moved to the East End of London in 1996 where he continues to live with his partner and two children. During the 'noughties', he was the Chair of the Board of Governors at his children's primary school. Responding to the need for more pupil provision he, along with many others, became involved in the successful redevelopment and expansion of the school and its premises, a project that spanned some 8 years in total.

Lauriston Primary was a very successful single form entry school in Hackney. It was a really interesting architectural context – a 130 year history of education and architecture was before our very eyes. You had the 1892 Education Reform Act red brick primary school across the street and what had once been a secondary school, later absorbed into Hackney Community College. Both buildings were converted into private flats and all this created more pressure on our single entry school. Lauriston was built on what had been a bombsite across the street from the original school, you had this prefab 70s building – all one level, which was already 15–18 years beyond its given lifespan. A failing building with a failing smoke alarm system – we had gas foghorns for fire drills and things like that. The layout and design of the building came out of a 1970s model of an open-plan classroom, it had a lot of really dynamic, idiosyncratic characteristics, which a good number of people felt really added to the 'Lauriston-ness' of the school.

Everybody was protective of the school because it had done so well with so little. The Head teacher, Heather Rockhold and the Deputy, Peter Sanders – through adapting really bad and failing architecture – made a wonderfully creative context for learning. It became an incubator for the ethos for the school. This had to do with architecture, but it also had to do with people, the type of person who would have come to Hackney in the early mid-70s and stayed and devoted their life to teaching. It was a very unique set of people who had a calling and a commitment. We wanted to give them the building they should have always had. We wanted a landmark building and that frightens people because it means a landmark cost.

Education has been transformed in Hackney, largely through the building of new schools under Labour. The government under Tony Blair had a scheme to provide 50% of the funding to enlarge successful schools to another form of entry. There was a tremendous layer of local politics involved at council level. We took a long while getting Hackney Council to match the funding from Central Government, that took nearly two years before they finally agreed and it ultimately took a change in the re-organisation of the Labour party within Hackney. This allowed us to do a feasibility study.

We visited a number of new schools across London, there was lots of good documentation of those projects, we also had the great fortune of having a couple of architect parents who'd been co-opted onto the governing body, that was part of the empowerment of the design group and the school. The stakeholders were parents, governors, children, teachers, it really was a community school, there were a lot of connections between children and parents and teachers and place.

We went out to a group of of five architects and appointed a really great practice called Meadowcroft Griffin. Ann Griffin carried out the most amazing amount and quality of consultation and came up with this idea of 'Lauristoness". Her very first move was to imagine a big suitcase and ask the teachers and students – "you know we're moving, what do you want to keep, what do you want to put in the suitcase and what do you want to leave behind?" It was a great metaphor that allowed us to take something that was very well known but intangible and we concretised that. We felt like we knew what it was and what needed to be preserved. Every council carries out their own form of consultation and usually the less the return in their eyes the better – there will be fewer problems. They carried out the consultation on the enlargement of the school but they didn't carry out consultation in regard to the project or the building, Ann Griffin drove all of that.

We really felt that if the school was decanted to another location the separation from the community would be so great. We were trying to protect some aspect of continuity, but also the experience of the children going through the school who would never experience the final building. It was tricky. We knew we had to accommodate 30 children in a class, we knew the ethos and we'd learned what Lauriston was about and what was special about it, we knew we wanted this hybrid classroom model of both open plan but also semi-closed. There are very strict measurements and guidelines as to what you can have, Ann came up with this open / closed classroom model to design the corridor outside the classrooms, an area known as the 'big sink'. You had big sinks, but you also had breakout areas where the classroom, in a very organic way could extend out into the corridor.

The school and the area is very mixed, far more than meets the eye. There was a lot of anxiety about change, irrespective of what class you belonged to. It was a very mixed cohort and their voices were certainly heard, parents were involved through the client group, but also came into contact through the consultation. A lot of power resided with the school because of their accomplishments, particularly the Head. The whole idea was that this was a community school; the community would be using the school out-of-hours. A large part of the design of the school looked at where the hall would be situated to provide access for the community, so that it was attached to the school, but you wouldn't have to come through or be involved the school. You know it came from everybody's money whether they were a parent or not.

We had a very early meeting and each body had to stand up and say what they wanted out of the project and what their ambitions were. We went first and then the architects. Then the contractors stood up and had the shortest, most succinct presentation, the head of the firm said: "We're involved in this project for profit", whereas everyone else had these

pie-in-the-sky utopian, idealistic, communitarian ambitions. It was a little bit of a turn-face because we'd heard all the right things from them in order to win the contract.

An 'early win', was that about £90,000 went into the re-design of a portion of the playground that the children could use through the building project. As part of this 'early win' we came up with the idea of using cross laminated timber [CLT], then a new form of construction we were looking at. We asked: "Why don't we use the caretaker's house as a pilot and learn some lessons from that that we can apply to the main school?"

We had a project manager from the council, I don't even want to imagine how many hours I spent with him. He was there for about 3 years before he moved on and he was really, really engaged and got a lot of 'good cop / bad cop' from me! Everyone was united in getting a 2-form school built within budget and to programme. Design goes through various stages and evolutions and you have to come up with a detailed design, which actually tells the contractor what to do, not just what it will look like in plan or elevation. There were painful moments where we'd have to 'value engineer' – which basically means: find something cheaper that you don't want in order to make it work. The quantity surveyor was someone who initially came into the design team, probably because of his professional remit and personality, but maybe because of an ideological fit he ended up more aligned with the contractor than the design team. They're in a difficult situation because they have to serve every stakeholder and their interests.

We had weekly project meetings, it felt like a full time job, it was relentless. The contractors have an amazing amount of insidious power because they can always withdraw or throw labour at a project. We had sub-contractors who went bankrupt, which was a big challenge,

their works would be half-way completed and they would disappear, but some of the sub-contractors like KLH rolled in, threw up the CLT in an incredibly efficient, speedy way. Then there were other elements which were really frustrating, with the quality – if not the quality of the materials, then the quality of installation. Everybody felt part of and had ownership and responsibility for quality.

The council were very present, they also came in at really crucial moments where things had broken down, and we would go to the Town Hall and actually meet in these high-level, crisis summit meetings. The real shock for me was the degree, level and amount of compromise that one has to open oneself up to in architecture. It was the classic triangle of budget – programme – final building. You have this image of a triangular piece of fabric, basically you have the contractor, the quantity surveyor and the council pulling on the programme and budget, because if programme slips you're talking re-costing, all of which has implications. Budget drives programme, but then the final building is driven by budget and programme too. Ideally, we keep that triangular piece of cloth rigid and everyone pulls equally from their own side, we were all tugging at our own corners trying to keep the triangle straight, but at the same time get what we really wanted to have. Everybody knew exactly the position of the other, there was real clarity. It was really just a question of how hard each point on that triangle pushed, or pulled. The problem is, if one of those corners becomes slackened the other things slip.

We were lucky to go into it in a strong supporting, but challenging mode and that came partially out of the idea "what does a governing body do in relation to a school?" – they support and challenge. I wouldn't do anything differently in relation to those relationships and points in the triangle.

You have a client and whether it's a school, a head teacher, community, or residents in a housing estate, they need an advocate, someone who is going to press all the parties to make sure the interests of the immediate users and immediate stakeholders are met. There's a great investment of trust. Rebuilding projects don't necessarily have their advocates, the council will have their advocates, the contractor will have their advocate; the architect will be an advocate for the school and the project. Unfortunately it does come down to voices and who will keep pushing to be heard.

There are voices that are silent or voices that aren't being listened to. We were fortunate as a group to have a very strong sense of what we valued. We were helped by the architect to put a name to it and could point to architectural features that encapsulated the ethos of the school. A real success is that the council was supportive in finding additional monies in supporting the building and school we were aiming for. We largely kept to budget, we largely kept to programme and we largely came up with the building we were aiming for. There were changes in Headship and people moved on, there was burn out, but for the architect and the community – it was a big award-winning project.

It's a spacious building, it's now full, but we only went up by one form of entry each year so there was managed growth. The old Lauriston was invisible it had zero presence from the street, the new building suddenly announced itself very prominently and actually overhung the pavement. So it went from zero presence to a profound presence. The successes came out of going into it with the view that if everybody pulls and pushes in tandem we'll come up with a good end product.

05

Neighbourhoods for Play

Dinah Bornat

The urban design of new housing developments is a complex puzzle of functional requirements, from the individual units and mix; through to road layout, parking, bike storage and refuse. Depending on the size of the development this puzzle may also include play areas, community centres, schools and other community uses.

For children, places close to home are crucial for supporting their need to play, their 'default activity' comes naturally to them. Play should occur when, where and how a child chooses and be neither organized for them, nor supervised by others.

Planning policy for new developments views play as a distinct activity, isolating it into play 'areas'. It states maximum walking distances from home and sets out minimum standards of $4m^2$ to $10m^2$ per child (depending on the local authority). This is an uncomfortable fit, as play specialists will tell you; children do not naturally play in single designated areas, preferring instead to move around from place to place. It also predicates adult supervision and segregates children into age groups, again not a natural way to play.

In addition to this, the macro economics of housing supply aim for managed growth and consumer choice - powerful forces over which children have little or no influence, compared to homeowners, car owners or voters.

Play is a fundamental aspect of a healthy society, but for a number of varied and complex reasons the numbers of children able to play outside has dropped significantly over the last generation. 'Playing out' a Bristol based initiative, seeks to change this and has supported resident-led regular street closures that enable children to play outside safely for several hours.

Bristol University's recently published report on their work, sets the lack of street play in the context of a public health crisis, with only '21% of boys and 16% of girls meeting the exercise guidelines of at least 60 minutes per day'. It suggests that the 'hours between 3:30 pm and 6 pm on weekdays...(are) the 'critical window' for children's physical activity.' It cites studies in the US, which have found that it is 'during this time when differences in weekday physical activity between low and high active children and non-obese and obese children are greatest'. The report points to broader social outcomes for other members of the community that arise when children are able to play outside, such as increased neighbourliness, new friendships and more social cohesion.

This is welcome news as, a recent report by the UK Green Building Council testifies, developers, housing associations and local authorities are beginning to see a link between the quality of their external spaces and wider health and wellbeing outcomes. It describes health and wellbeing as a 'Mega Trend' and compares more traditional satisfaction levels with health and wellbeing principles, giving a new angle on consumer choice. The study found for example that a home that will improve in value and will have desirability when sold was less important than a neighbourhood where children can play outside safely.

My research into ten recently completed housing estates in England found that children are the dominant users of external spaces in residential areas, I believe it is axiomatic that we should be placing their needs at the heart of how we design new developments, becoming their champions, rather than their jailers.

Extended observation is the key to beginning to understand what children and the rest of the community need in terms of layout and forms the basis of my research. It suggests that a network of car-free, shared

spaces that are well overlooked and accessible from dwellings create the best conditions for social use of space and the safest environment for children of all ages to play and get about safely.

As well as physical activity, there are other gains to be had. Play is very much a social activity I have found that where children play unsupervised, spaces are more used by other members of the community. Children seek each other out and look for spaces where other children are playing. This is what the architect and urbanist Jan Gehl calls a 'self reinforcing process'. In other words children attract other children who attract other children and adults.

I believe we need to move away from the capacity and distance driven rules and the constricting economic model and instead champion unsupervised play as a 'right' for all children, this means we need to design spaces that allow play to occur everywhere, not keep children corralled in playgrounds, which have become adult dominated and over supervised.

How do we go about this?

My research provides a set of layout tools that are useful for clients, developers and architects to articulate access and networks across their developments, but its crucial that we augment this by involving people in the process. Observational research can be more representative than an invited response through consultation and can provide a strong evidence base for healthy discussions between designers, developers and residents. This research can be augmented with workshops and community sessions and will lead to a richer participation and potential co-design process.

Dr Ben Fincham, a sociologist from Sussex University has written a book on fun. Ben's work shows a distinction between how we have fun as children and how we have fun as adults, with many adults wishing they could have more. Ben and I have discussed the shift from childhood to adulthood, when fun becomes more inhibited and less free. Young people are under huge pressure to conform and start to take on the subtle messages of the places around them, which by extension are expressions of society's desires. They start to read spaces as being segregated and 'not for them', at the same time their free play turns to organised and structured activities. This denies many young people the freedom to keep exploring through play.

In built environment policy, when children's play is misunderstood or ignored, young people often fare the worst, policy makers so often resort to lazy stereotypes of anti social behaviour and gang culture, proposing formal provision as an ineffective way to combat these unwanted activities. Watch teenagers and you will see that they still play and enjoy social activity, hanging out with other age groups just like the rest of us. I believe they are a hugely untapped resource in our communities and that working with them to co-design and co-manage could hold the key to more successful public spaces.

Finally, what if we recalibrated the external spaces in our neighbourhoods, making them primarily places for play and fun? This would mean activity and social interaction would be prized and integrated, designed in from the outset, checked and monitored after completion. To achieve this we must cut across all the rules, weaving new ones into the functional and economic models. We would need to balance conflicting desires and be sensitive to the needs of everyone, for example: providing spaces for gardening and quiet contemplation or replacing the 'no ball game' signs with the right to play at agreed times.

If we cherish the fun and freedom that comes from playing out, we will be rewarded with health and wellbeing outcomes in abundance. This will not always be easy; the car can no longer rule, but the reward could be neighbourhoods where young and old feel safe and secure, where social ties are strong and where people want to stay living for generations to come.

05

The Interview

Chloe Smith aged 11 and her sister Kaitlin aged 13 live with another sister and their parents on the 8th floor of Fitzgerald House, Poplar. This 19-storey block completed in 1971, is adjacent to the East India Dock Road on the Lansbury Estate, the former site of the 1951 Festival of Britain Live Architecture exhibition. The fabric of the building is now in a poor state of repair and a decision is pending regarding its demolition. The immediate area suffers some of the highest levels of air pollution in London.

Kaitlin

Inside the flat is kind of tight because we're a five-person family, there's only one toilet and one bathroom and we have to share rooms. It's a nice flat you know – comfortable, but I don't really think that it's specifically designed for little kids. Our rooms are not that big there's only enough space for one bed or a bunk bed, there's no room for a desk or chair. I do my homework on my bed. *[Chloe: I do it in the living room.]*

It's important to have my own personal space even though I'm not going to have one anymore when I start to share a bedroom again. Having a meal - you can't have a table in the living room or anywhere because there's not enough space, we're either on the floor or on the sofa.

Chloe

Our flat doesn't let us do all the things we want to do. I think our flat is designed for about 3 or 4. Because both of our parents work all the time there's a lot of work that we have to do and it's normally kind of a messy house because we're all so busy. We don't actually have a dining table to sit and eat at, it would be nice to all sit around the table, we all do make Sunday Roasts and everything we just don't get to sit and eat as a family. We can't have friends round, we'd like to, we haven't had any friends inside our house for years.

What I like best about my flat is when you're in the living room there's a lot of windows. So if you're hot you can just open the windows and you're better.

Kaitlin

You can see the scenery, you can see very far. One of the windows you can open easily, they won't open a lot, but it's really, really hard to shut it, so we have to get our Dad to shut it otherwise it just gets left open. Basically, when we got moved to our house the windows were really rusted. Even though the building is really old and it's probably going to get knocked down soon, the rent is really, really high.

Chloe

I can worry about it [the rent] at some points but I try not to think about it and everything will be all right. It's just a temporary flat for us, so we're gonna have to move any time. We've lived there about 2 years... we can move anywhere, anytime. Every time we move I've just settled down again, we don't know where everything is and we have to explore.

Kaitlin

It's very random when we move. We've been in temporary accommodation for about 12 years, we've moved to multiple places. It's hard to make friends. We make friends and then we have to move away and we don't see them again.

Our building looks very old from the outside especially. You should look out for a very tall, old building that looks like it might collapse and you'll find it. Sometimes I just feel like the building will collapse, because of how old it is and how tall it is, it does feel like it will.

Probably, when it had just been made it was a really nice building to live in, but now it's not. We don't really feel like our home is ours, because we pay loads of money just to stay there and obviously we're not going to stay there forever.

The lifts are always breaking down and even though people come and clean the bottom floor, other floors aren't exactly sanitary. You have to walk round to stairs that people can easily fall down. You need a fob to get into the stairs otherwise you have to buzz up and if no one's there then you can't get in and you just start waiting outside.

Chloe

The first time we got into the building it was really crowded and it was like a new change and it also had that feeling like we're all going to tumble over and it will all be over. We've got used to it not feeling that safe. They've been saying they'll knock it down for about a year now.

There's always dirt in the lifts as well, alcohol and things. When you're waiting for the lift sometimes the lights go out and flicker and it's like an echoing room, most times the lift breaks down. The stairs go up to floor one and then you have to go outside and people smoke and do illegal things there and its not very nice, we don't want to walk through the building.

Kaitlin

It does give you a really creepy and bad feeling when you're going home at night, because we have to go through an alley to get to our house, so it's not exactly safe. We're allowed outside - to go out, but it's normally the fact that we don't want to. We feel safer outside, especially when you get the relief, like you're finally out.

Chloe

I go across the road [East India Dock Rd]. If I'm on my own, it's really boring and quiet. I'm just wandering around trying to find something to do, but if I'm with someone I always have something to talk about and it's really nice to be with people – it's like a friendly feeling. I like hanging out with friends, so I'm normally playing with my friend, we met in Poplar Park- it's right across the road.

It's quite nice that we live right next to a market, but we don't know lots of people on the market. There's a lot of homeless people begging for money in this area and we feel bad because we don't have money to give. When we do have ones or twos we find, we do give them.

Mum and Dad give me a time to come home because all the people who do drugs selling and things like that are out later when I like to go home. The places we go when we're out aren't for kids, they're for everyone, I think. Places designed for adults are really fancy and usually have signs like: "No kids allowed" or something and when they are for kids there's like parks and toys and balloons and everything – joyful.

Kaitlin

We don't really talk to people, not because our Mum and Dad tell us not to, it's just that we don't know people. We'd like more freedom and other places to play outside. There's this green area we know *[Chloe: There's a really beautiful but old willow tree living there]*, there's also a gap in the fence where if you go through, it's a shortcut to a park. It's a nice place to just chill out under the tree. We sit there and listen to music.

I think things for adults have a lot more money put into them than things for kids, because kids won't think about that, kids will just go into anything and go "Look there's a park", but some people do actually think

“Right, look at this and look at this” they obviously put more effort into it. They probably think adults are more observative [sic], they probably think kids just want to go to the park or stuff like that. But for example I’m very observative I like thinking of right this is what’s here and this is what’s here, like it just processes through my mind in a certain way, because that’s because of the way I’ve been brought up.

Chloe

I’m just like playful, but also observant, I just go with the flow! There are some places I like to go that aren’t really designed for children, like cafes or pubs. It’s just nicer, a nice feeling, being out, happy, like an aura. In the park we go on the swing, we speak or play games.

Kaitlin

Adults can use play equipment if they are made structurally fit and big enough for them and strong enough to hold their weight. I don’t think it’s wrong to want to play on a slide – you don’t have to be “ Nope, that’s for little kids!” obviously it’s for everyone to enjoy

Chloe

Everyone should have the opportunity to play if they want, it’s not un-ordinary [sic] for someone to want to have fun, sometimes a parent – they want to have fun with their kid. When adults design buildings for us mostly they want us to behave sensibly, but sometimes they want you to have fun and enjoy things.

Kaitlin

It’s very rare that people make buildings specifically for kids. Like if there is a building it’s made for people to live in not to actually enjoy.

I think places like libraries and school are basically there for people to sit there and read, rather than to play around in it. In buildings we all use, designers think about the overall place for people in general to go, I don't think they think about adults or kids. Adults who design don't think about the shape of the building, they don't really think about the colours, or what kind of floor it is, they just think "Right this is a building". A house has to be an environment where kids can grow up in, not just somewhere that they're just going to be here to sleep and everything, they actually have to call it their home. Not all kids think "Ah, I want to go to the park" and stuff, some kids actually think about their surroundings.

Chloe

I think most adults think about all fancy things, they don't worry about kids, they think we're in the way. They don't think about anything joyful for kids. Adults just sit down and want to have a chat, some children just look up and see the world, children are really creative and love to do activities

Kaitlin

So when you get a bit more space you do.

Chloe

Kids want to join in, the adults think that if they try and join in they'll just get in the way, just because people are younger or older doesn't mean they can't do things the other people can, everyone is equal to everyone. But if everyone was the same you wouldn't know who was who and what was what, it's really boring, the earth was created for all different types of people.

Different is awesome.

FURTHER READING

Sarah Wigglesworth

Designing with Downsizers
www.dwell.group.shef.ac.uk 2016

Peg Rawes

Little Boxes, Fewer Homes
Shelter 2013

The Man Without Content
Giorgio Agamben 1999

An Ethics of a Potential Urbanism
Camillo Boano 2017

The Real Cost of Poor Housing
Building Research Establishment 2010

Housing and Poverty Blog
Gordon Cullen Archive, University of Westminster and Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2015

Hilary Satchwell

Lessons for Students in Architecture
Herman Hertzberger 1991

The Architecture of Happiness
Alain de Botton 2014

Making People-Friendly Towns: Improving the Public Environment in Towns and Cities
Francis Tibbalds 1992

The Architecture of Ralph Erskine
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Charles Montgomery 2015

Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space
Jan Gehl 1971

Mellis Haward

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Stephen Hill, Winston Churchill Memorial Trust 2014

Altered Estates
Levitt Bernstein, PRP & HTA Architects 2016

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Matthew Bolton 2017

Big Capital: Who is London for?
Anna Minton 2017

Dinah Bornat

The Death and Life of Great American Cities
Jane Jacobs 1961

No Fear: Growing up in a risk averse society
Tim Gill 2007

Children's Independent Mobility: An international comparison and recommendations for action
Policy Studies Institute 2015

Why temporary street closures for play make sense for public health
Bristol University Play England 2017

ACRONYMS EXPLAINED

BRE	Building Research Establishment
CABE	Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
CLT	Community Land Trust
CLT	Cross Laminated Timber
DWELL	Designing for Wellbeing in Environments for Later Life
LCLT	Lewisham Community Land Trust
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
OWCH	Older Women's Co-Housing
UKGBC	UK Green Building Council

BIOGRAPHIES

Sarah Wigglesworth is director of her London-based architectural practice, which she founded in 1994. Her work is acknowledged as a pioneering influence in British Architecture. Specialising in exploring ecological solutions, her practice has designed buildings for the educational, community, masterplanning, cultural and housing sectors, in particular specialist housing, and has won many awards for its work. A teacher for 32 years, Sarah was Professor of Architecture at the University of Sheffield between 1997 and 2016 where she led up the DWELL research project designing exemplary neighbourhoods and housing for older people.

Peg Rawes is Professor of Architecture and Philosophy and Director of the Masters in Architectural History at the Bartlett School of Architecture UCL. Her research focuses on social and architectural histories of wellbeing, especially in contemporary housing, ecologies and poetics. These have been published as the film, Equal By Design with Beth Lord (Lone Star Productions, 2016), 'Housing Biopolitics and Care' in Critical and Clinical Cartographies (2017) and 'Planetary Aesthetics' in Landscape and Agency (2017). Her edited volumes, Poetic Biopolitics publish architects alongside practitioners in the arts, environmental and human rights, social and medical research.

Mellis Haward is co-Director of Archio Architects who specialise in housing and community projects. Archio were commissioned to design London's first purpose-built Community Land Trust housing, working with LCLT in Lewisham. Mellis has honed her passion for supporting alternative models of social housing through working with a number of notable practices and leading tours of 1950s social housing for the Twentieth Century Society. She has an expertise in Urban Design and Planning Policy and as a member of the Harrow and Tower Hamlets Design Panels advises councils on current applications and policy in the borough.

Hilary Satchwell is an architect and urbanist who brings strategic leadership to a broad range of housing and mixed-use intensification projects

that prioritise placemaking, people and 'good growth'. She is a Founder Director of Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design, a consultancy set up in 2003 to continue the legacy of Francis Tibbalds in 'Making People Friendly Places'. Hilary is interested in how projects are developed and shaped, and effective decision-making achieved. Her work examines the influences, actions and behaviours that lead to the creation of beneficial projects and places that work well for their users.

Dinah Bornat is an architect, researcher, teacher, writer and a co-founder of ZCD Architects in Hackney. She is a fellow of the RSA and a Design Advocate for the Mayor of London. Her work in practice involves the design of diverse buildings, from housing and education through to arts and community projects. In 2016 Dinah published Housing Design for Community Life; researching how residents use external space in new developments. This research and subsequent projects is informing and shaping the development of new urban design principles, policy, guidance and practice.

Alex Julyan is a visual artist and Wellcome Trust Public Engagement Fellow. She uses a wide variety of media and approaches to make solo and collaborative works that instigate critical and creative conversations. Her curatorial practice is focused on the production of large-scale performances and live events, which straddle music, theatre, history and science. She is interested in creating a public discourse about architecture and its social impacts on wellbeing. In 2017 working with architects and artists she co-created The Poplar Pavilion. Sited in an empty civic square this experimental structure was made for and shaped by its users.

Concept
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Alex Julyan, 2018

Passionate and insightful, Chain Reaction is a collection of essays and interviews about the built environment and our health. Five essays by architectural professionals raise questions about responsibility, knowledge and political will in architectural design. These are linked by the stories of five individuals who speak about their experiences in homes, schools and neighbourhoods that both fail and succeed in supporting good health. This collection was a unique collaboration between the editor and the book's authors to create a chain of distinct voices and opinion. Collectively they consider whether architecture's ability to change health outcomes is a utopian dream, or a revolution in waiting.

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