

GLU Proposal on housing starting off point – at 10.05.2014

Basic starting points for discussion:

- ≡ Housing as a fundamental right – housing that is good for people, according to their own identification, safe, within people's means allowing to meet other basic needs, and also within a community (where people are from) is a right.
- ≡ Financialisation – as a process which leads to an accrual of capital and earnings at the very top of the economic ladder, yet with a stagnation or decline throughout the rest of the ladder.
- ≡ Financialisation is a process dependent upon political choices – it doesn't just happen through some sort of “silent hand” of the market, yet exists very much as a set of policy choices – including restraint of new capital and social spending (leaving housing to a deregulated market, instead of some sort of State-led process).
- ≡ So, this financialisation leads to increasing precarity for workers on two levels:
 - 1) through deregulation of the financial system, leading to capital flowing into financial markets at the expense of manufacturing (since there's a better short-term return to be made in markets than manufacturing), yet it also
 - 2) leads to increased precarity for workers as tenants/homeowners – as this financial capital flows into real estate (as all huge build ups of capital inevitability do) leading to people losing their housing.
- ≡ But this “financialisation of housing” also leads to wild price swings in housing costs and larger long-term economic instability. Apart from an erosion of housing affordability, it also leads to overly leveraged banks and high levels of household debt. States feel compelled to bail out banks when property prices come crashing down – yet States themselves fostered this situation by abandoning: 1) a commitment to provision housing, and 2) deregulation of financial markets, which created so much liquidity (that feeds into rising property prices).
- ≡ Additionally, as governments (particularly on a local and municipal level) themselves have appropriated a neo-liberal logic of housing as asset (versus a social right), they've also become dependent upon developers for increasingly scarce funding – so development and the politics of the use of the city and land space have become developer, as opposed to State, led. A logic of “partnership” with developers has flowed from this, instead of viewing people's rights as paramount above private interests.

Objective of project:

- ≡ A comparative study of the effects of financialisation on housing rights, across countries, but also on a more local level, with a focus on municipalities but this could even involve specific neighbourhoods.

Practically, what might this look like:

- ≡ This could take a view of comparing different national/regional/local experiences with housing issues – with a global connection looking as to how financialisation has led to a degradation of housing rights.
- ≡ This could document through many forms: the eviction of long-time residents because of speculative capital, or the exclusion of social housing from new developments due to the State's need to maximise property taxes, or the selling-off of existing housing to private speculators.

- ≡ It could also seek to demonstrate how financialisation has created pressure on people to acquire property as an investment, due to reduced public or private pension provision.
- ≡ The project might seek out an academic to co-ordinate the project, and then individual contributors to discuss more closely the experiences within their proper jurisdictions.

To be determined:

1. A more in-depth timeline for this project – i.e. Fine tuning aims, objectives, participants, partners (individuals + organisations), input schedule, etc...
2. Could this project also enlarge its scope into questions of municipal re-appropriation of public services: what examples are there of levels of government going “against the tide” on this issue, as it were?
3. How to better integrate the experiences of the Global South within such a project...
4. Further ideas...

Suggested beginner readings/reviews:

Hoffer, Frank. “I want council houses in my neighbourhood.” *Global Labour Column*. Number 168, april 2014.

On Quebec's housing market:

Gaudreau, Louis, Guillaume Hébert and Minh Nguyen. *Les périls de l'accès à la propriété*. IRIS. 2013.
Url: <http://www.iris-recherche.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Note-Acc%C3%A8s-WEB-02.pdf>

On the UK more specifically:

Dorling, Danny. *All that solid: The Great Housing Disaster* (chapter 1). 2014. url:
http://www.dannydorling.org/books/allthatissolid/Material_files/AllThatIsSolidExtract.pdf

Visit the class website on housing: <http://classonline.org.uk/policy/housing>

Visit the Joseph Rowntree Foundations website: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/search/site/housing>

Comments/queries/suggestions? Please send to christopher.k.schwartz@gmail.com