



Parallel session E2

Unaffordable Housing

Monday 11 November, 16.00 – 17.30

Haldane Room

Chair: **Prof. Miraftab Faranak**, Professor of Urban and Regional Planning, University of California, Berkeley

Discussant: **Dr Joe Penny**, Lecturer in Economic Geography, Queen Mary, University of London

Broken Cities: Inside the global housing crisis

Dr Deborah Potts, Emeritus Reader, Department of Geography, King's College London

Generation Rent in London and divided families in South Africa; dormitory living in Shenzhen and in the industrial cities of the Czech Republic; squatters on the edge of Lisbon and cage housing in Hong Kong. Can these be understood as products of a global urban housing crisis? Surely these types of housing are far too diverse? This book argues that there is, nonetheless, an underlying structural issue shaping the housing affordability dilemma when this is examined in relation to demand rather than supply. In all cities across the world, there are very many people working in jobs which generate incomes that are simply too low to cover the cost of 'decent', secure formal market-priced housing. Housing outcomes in individual cities are always shaped by specific local histories and politics, but there is none for which this does not hold true today. The global hegemony of capitalism over the past three decades means that market forces shape housing costs across the globe and housing policies have shifted towards private sector 'solutions' and a focus on housing supply, and away from the crucial mitigation of solutions accounting for insufficient monetary demand. At the same time, the share of income accrued by ordinary workers has been trending down, while in the world's largest cities, the cost of formal, market-priced housing has increased. The global financial crash was an inevitable outcome of ignoring the 'inconvenient truth' of the mismatch between the incomes of the many and real housing costs, and has created feedback loops which have worsened that mismatch. In rich countries there are signs that the gap between city housing outcomes for poorer groups and those in less wealthy countries is narrowing. In global cities it is also seemingly creating new norms in which many families are increasingly geographically divided, and the much lauded negative effect of urbanisation on fertility proceeds to unexpected levels, reshaping global economies and environments. The crisis is deepening. Yet future housing outcomes will be mitigated by the built-in legacies of patterns of previous 'ordinary' home ownership achieved in more forgiving times, and of regulated rentals and what is left of public rental housing. These housing histories, alongside the determination of city populations to fight for their rights to the city, are crucial influences on the future path of the housing dilemma.

Housing and the Authoritarian Turn

Dr David Madden, Associate Professor in Sociology, LSE

We are living in an era of intersecting crises. This paper will theorise the connections between two widely experienced areas of crisis: housing crisis and political crisis. The housing crisis consists of the difficulty for households in obtaining affordable and stable housing; the growth of homelessness, evictions, displacement, overcrowding, and other forms of precarity; the growing inability for the housing system to ensure the social reproduction of labour, especially low-wage labour; and the mismatch between the types of housing being produced in most cities and the social need for residential space. The political crisis is embodied in capitalist democracy's loss of legitimacy; in the failure of states to guarantee the standard of living; in the fragmentation of traditional political institutions; and in the rise of neo-authoritarian politics in many places. In short, in many different contexts, both the housing system and the political system appear to be under intense structural strain. These crises are directly impacting one another, but they are generally theorised separately. This paper argues that these two crises are linked politically and experientially, and therefore need to be analysed together. The housing question is taking new forms that are distinctive to the urban spaces and processes of authoritarian neoliberalism. Urban housing is increasingly a site for new repressive political technologies and forms of variegated citizenship created by states that are simultaneously empowered and hollowed out. It is also potentially the source of new kind of resistance. This paper identifies the specific ways in which crisis conditions in the residential and political spheres mutually shape one another. The contours of the urban future will be shaped by intersecting struggles in response to these crises.