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**News Coverage of the Current Housing Issues
in Britain**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci zpracoval(a) samostatně a použil(a) jen uvedeníh pramenů a literatury.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Housing is an issue globally recognized as an important and indispensable aspect of human life. From the cradle to the grave, every human being is influenced by the place and the environment he or she lives in. In Britain, housing has far-reaching social implications, making it a topic worth exploring.

I selected this topic due to my interest in British housing, reinforced by my stay in London for several months. As I worked in London, I was presented with an opportunity to enter a number of houses, to approach the people who occupied them, and I spent a great amount of time discussing with them their way of life, their issues involving housing, mortgages and other daily concerns, which provided me with the necessary input for writing the thesis.

The purpose of the present thesis is to elicit the major housing issues in contemporary Britain based on British press coverage. The newspaper analysis is delivered against the background of the historical development of housing after World War II and with regard to regional (North/South) differences.

The thesis represents a contribution to the discipline of Cultural Studies, as defined by the publication *British cultural studies: an introduction* by Graeme Turner [1]. The sources used include *RIBA book of British housing: 1900 to the present day* by Ian Colquhoun and *British civilization: an introduction* by John Oakland (see Bibliography). From the internet sources I used *An Introduction to Social policy* by Paul Spicker, as well the websites of a number of British national dailies, including *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Independent*.

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter is composed of very short background of housing in Britain, problem statement, research objectives, and brief scope of study. The following four chapters are dedicated to the essential history events which has influenced a contemporary housing. Chapter six with its subchapters presents an analysis of the current housing issues based on the British news analysis.

2 POST-WAR HOUSING IN BRITAIN

2.1 Development of Housing after World War II

Living conditions in post-war Britain were very poor. The overall effort to make the country a better place to live was omnipresent. About 200,000 dwellings were destroyed during the war and next 250,000 were badly damaged; thus it was impossible to live in these habitations. [2] It is quite appropriate to mention an increase of a wave of sympathy in post-war Britain especially among women, among the workers and among some members of the middle class. People suffered severely across the country. A big problem was seen in the field of country's slums, which were overcrowded. Therefore, when a general election took place in 1945, there were about 20 per cent of people who refused to participate. About 39 per cent of people, who mainly belonged to the middle class and the upper class and participated to the election, voted Conservative. Finally, the biggest part of votes, near to 48 per cent, belonged to Labour. This was because of a power of the numerous people from the working-class, who voted in a much unified way. One third of the middle-class voted Labour Party at the same time. The leader of Labour was Clement Attlee at that time. [3] The government under his leadership focused "on radical programmes of social and economic reform, which laid the foundations for a welfare state." [4]

Obviously, the Labour Government faced two problems in the field of housing. The first problem was to control the new construction of houses and the other one was to deal with the allocation of them. Local authorities provided houses to people in need and it was a big number of these houses because only 26 per cent of houses were owner occupied in 1945. [5]

A relevant discussed issue was based on the question whether the new houses would be constructed or the old and damaged houses

would be reconstructed. When the new dwellings were built, it was usually, but not always, according to new and better space standards. In addition, there was the Dudley Committee who recommended a minimum of 900 square feet (83.6 sq.m.) for a three-bedroomed house. This was up to the 1951 respected during the whole season of Labour Government. [6]

2.1.1 New Dwellings

To build a home for everyone was a crucial goal of a housing policy in 1950s. An important role was played by local authorities. To build 240,000 new houses during next few years was an objective number one. In spite of an overloaded building industry, there were built 206,559 dwellings until 1948 and 170,000 were built every year in the course of the following three years. [7]

In accordance with the Cabinet Memorandum, related to housing, composed by Minister of Health and published in 13 October 1945, one of three main points dealt with “The house building programme in its various aspects and the action intended to be taken by the Government to secure the execution of the programme speedily and at a reasonable cost.” [8] This implies that the building programme consists of different types of houses and the author of the Memorandum mentions these types and also adds some information on each type. There are main four types: temporary houses, permanent houses built by Local Authorities, permanent houses of non-traditional types and houses erected by private persons under licence. The Minister also recommends the collaboration between Housing Associations and Local Authorities. No less important is the information which is dedicated to the importance of rural housing. The Minister mentions here relation to food production which is important for the country. Lastly, the Minister of Health puts stress on a declaration of “doing everything possible to ensure that building materials and

components are produced in sufficient quantities and in due time to meet the requirements of the Building Programme [...]“ [9].

2.1.2 Birth of New Architecture

When we stress on the architecture of post-war period, a new style of design is seen. Firstly it was a Modernism which appeared, and then The Modernism converted into Brutalism. It was the government that controlled the design of new buildings. Modernism was a kind of a new hope given to people after the times of austerity. The efforts for a better future included new ideas and new building materials. New shapes of buildings and also some new colours, both originated in the era of modernist architects. The architects from Scandinavia, from France or from Germany, for example Le Corbusier or Ludwig Mies van der Rohe were the idols of British architects of the time who were hired by Hugh Casson. A special event that took place in London, in 1951, was called the Festival of Britain and was organised by the Labour government. All the expressions of freedom, science, power and prosperity were contained in it. These went hand in hand with the idea of the Welfare State. A highlight of the Exhibition was The Dome of Discovery, designed by Ralph Tubbs, which was demolished after the election of a new government (Conservative) as it remained a symbol of socialism. [10]

2.1.3 New Town Act

Another attempt of the establishment of new towns labelled the “New Town Act” and invented by the Parliament of the United Kingdom is dated 1946. It was decided to build new towns in the areas of England, Wales and Scotland. One of the towns built during this time was Harlow in Essex, England. When examining the photographs of this city, one can see very modest dwellings in comparison to the habitations from the Victorian era. In any case, the town was constructed from low-quality

materials because of low budget allocated to this purpose. Moreover, the first exhibition of a tower block originates in Harlow town. It is called "The Lawn" residential tower block which was ten-storeyed and was constructed in 1951 according to building plans of Sir Frederick Ernest Gibberd. [11] New Towns differ from the old cities because "The objective was to make them socially integrated areas whereby each individual would have greater access to amenities and a general improved standard of living. British New Towns were conceived as self-contained, socially balanced towns planned to receive overspill population and employment (Goodall, B 1987 p323) and many were built with the concept of utopianism in mind." [12]

2.1.3.1 Neighbourhood Unit

Moving into a new town is regarded as harmful and difficult and for this reason the aim was set up. A term for this kind of help is known as "neighbourhood unit". The objective of the project was to subdivide the town districts to several smaller units. Every unit assembled people from neighbourhood together owing to interconnected streets, common shopping facilities, public services, e.g. schools, libraries, hospital, bank, post office and other facilities as associations of different type which connect peoples together via their interests and hobbies. The neighbourhood unit is limited in size and in a density of a settled area. The idea of neighbourhood unit was of a clear and bright space, despite the fact that the units filled up to much space that they became excessively expensive to live in. Similarly, people often preferred privacy and quietness of their homes therefore it was exacting to increase a sense of community sometimes. [13][14]

3 1950S AND 1960S: FROM MODERNISM AND TOWER BLOCKS TO BRUTALISM

Modernism was introduced in 1950s by several architects who designed the accommodation primarily for working class. We include among the most famous building engineers professionals from Ove Arup or Powell and Moya Architects. It was John Hidalgo Moya who designed 'Skylon' vertical monument for the Festival of Britain in 1951. Important assignment was given to Powell and Moya when reconstructing the city of London. The architects were asked to come up with the project which would solve the task of accommodating 5,000 people. The solution was a large housing estate called 'Churchill Gardens', situated in Pimlico near to the Victoria Station. It was a complex of multi-storeyed buildings with no extra sense of quaintness. There were three-storeyed tower blocks alongside eight or ten-storeyed buildings. [15] And it was the beginning of the era during which the architects became the politicians as "from 1950, public housing in London became the direct responsibility of the London County Council (LCC) architectural department." [16] What happened was an enormous deviation from the old principles of the housing. Another concept by modernist architect was Hallfield Primary School designed by Lindsay Drake and Denys Lasdun, who also designed the South Bank Centre, and built in Paddington, London. The central idea was to build a different place to educate children. A design for the school focused on planning and circulation. From bird's eye view, the composition of parts remains a branchlet with leaves and blossoms (See Appendix I). The intention was to give to children an extraordinary place to study, to play and to develop their imaginativeness. All the classrooms are single storey with the windows opening to the garden with its greenery. [17] [18] Lately, the main school building and the Hallfield estate with its 14 blocks and laundry have been awarded

Grade II listed status by Heritage Minister John Penrose. “These blocks show real flair and beauty, and all the more so considering the post-war era in which they were conceived,” declared Mr Penrose and continued with saying that “Sixty years on, they have become a distinctive part of the London landscape, still looking good and remaining popular with residents and visitors alike.” [19]

3.1.1 Brutalism

Modernism fluently transformed into a style called Brutalism. As this label shows, the word was borrowed from French idiom ‘béton brut’, literally, raw concrete. Concrete was the main material used for the blockwork of new and new tower blocks. It was cheap, resistant and weatherproof. Exposed parts of concrete were a part of brutalist design – bricks combined with concrete, steel and glass. When comparing different type of buildings erected in 1950s and in 1960s, one evident thing may be seen. Library, office block, car park, theatre, university or cathedral were built according to one theme, furthermore, there was no distinct difference seen. Two or more storeys, raw concrete pillars, angular shapes and big volume, usually very massive forms. The finish impression was stark and restrained, the latter may cause that nobody would get distracted from the basic composition. There was no special embellishment, no bright colours, and no airy composition. The architects who worked at the buildings of the era came from middle-class background. They studied working-class people’s attitudes and then tried to transform the scientific knowledge into reality. Working class people were accustomed to live in terrace houses and the architects designed elevated walkways, which may look like streets in the sky, to stimulate working class terraces. Unfortunately, the main problem was seen in misunderstanding of taste and personality of working class. [20]

3.1.1.1 Trellick Tower

Trellick Tower was accomplished by The Greater London Council. It was designed by Hungarian Modernist Erno Goldfinger. Trellick Tower has thirty one stories and contains 217 flats, the lifts and services. It is also Grade II listed building in 1998. The flats were originally rented by the local council. A small number of flats are privately owned nowadays, but mainly the flats are social housing. Unpleasant situation emerged few years after occupancy of Trellick Tower in form of vandalism, and violence. This caused people to feel hostile towards Brutalism. In spite of enlarging of citizen dissenting voices, "The building of blocks of five or more stories accounted for just 9% of local authority building between 1953 and 1959 but increased in the early 1960s to reach a peak of 26% in 1966." [21] Another source says that there was built 1.8 million homes between 1965 and 1969. 50% of these homes were built by local authorities. There was also established Housing Corporation in 1964 whose target was to fund new affordable homes and regulates housing associations. [22] New social housing was built mainly for certain groups of people belonging to one of many specific groups, e.g. for elderly people or disabled persons.

4 1970S: DECLINE OF HIGH RISE

4.1 Downfall of British Modernist Architecture

The downfall of British modernist architecture is closely connected with the failure of the construction techniques practised during 1950s and 1960s. The most serious case includes the explosion of Ronan Point. This tower block was built from very cheap and low-quality material, pre-fabricated concrete panels. In fact, a local architect discovered some deviation from building process, consisting in the poor design of the joints.

This was a poorness of the joints connecting walls to the floor slabs. A lack of the supervision of the bricklayers and the auxiliary staff led to filling the gaps with the newspapers instead of concrete. For more details see Appendix II, Part A, B. All these mistakes led to an enormous explosion. The character of the accident was described as follows: “On the 16th of May 1968 a gas explosion led to the collapse of an entire corner of the recently opened Ronan Point council estate in Newham, East London. The responsible council tenant, Ivy Hodge, set off a domino effect of buckling flats by trying to light her stove in her 18th floor apartment. While Miss Hodge miraculously survived, four others died and seventeen were injured.” [23] Many of the families became homeless and insisted on being rehoused. [24] The accident caused widespread concerns of an infallible living and likewise an antipathy to the tower blocks. People felt that their trust had been betrayed. New tenants started to refuse moving to the tower blocks.

Another thing which upset people was that they were not asked for their opinion. Britons tend to have a close relationship to nature and being “grounded” is important for them. The common reversal which meant living in the “streets-in-the-air” was an inauspicious solution forced on the people by the British government. They simply did not adapt themselves to this way of life. Some aspects as flushing toilets or central heating, clean and new surroundings were positive. The latter was plausible primarily in the beginning of the tower block era but declined gradually and transformed finally to the aversion. The buildings were overly cold and anonymous. In spite of the atmosphere surrounding the council estates, several blocks including The Lawn, Trellick Tower and the Park Hill complex have been given listed status by English Heritage. [25]

4.2 Change of Preferences

The general election in 1970 resulted in the Conservative victory. The Conservative leader Edward Heat became Prime Minister and held his office until 1974. Tory's preference for the ownership of real estates, called "right to buy", began to take off, with the a number of council houses sold in England going up from 7,000 in 1970 to nearly 46,000 in 1972." [26] (See Appendix III). There was also the change in private renting which declined from 90% to less than 10%. The owner occupation was increasing from 1960s to the 1990s. This growth was due to the Building Societies for which a non-profitability was essential as well as a co-operative basis. [27] "Housing policy changed after 1970, when political support for council housing was withdrawn by the Conservatives. In the 1970s and 80s, council housing acquired a more residual role, and is now more concerned with welfare issues and special needs." [28]

4.3 Shelter Establishment and Housing Crisis

The situation of working class was oftentimes difficult, as may be seen in the movie by Ken Loach about homelessness, televised in 1966 in the United Kingdom. The title of the film was *Cathy Come Home* and it was watched by 12 million people. The movie portrayed a young family which became homeless. Firstly, the family lived happily. Its father was employed and mother managed housework and took care of two children. The turn in the story happened when father got injured at his work and he lost it consecutively. The injury was followed with series of other failures. The initial good living standard was replaced with poverty; family's debt increased and finally the family lost their home. At the very end of the film, two children are taken away from their mother by social services. The goal of the movie maker was to alert the public, the media, and the government, and to demonstrate how the serious the extent of

the housing crisis was. [29] This situation caused concern to the Reverend Bruce Henderson Kenrick, born in Liverpool, who set up the organisation, Shelter.

Shelter is a British housing charity “that works to alleviate the distress caused by homelessness and bad housing.” [30] The tradition of this charity is long and it holds a strong position in these days. A large number of people who cannot afford to get a mortgage and the people who are on a hard financial situation, or the people who are in the list of tenants waiting for the social housing, they can all contact the Shelter charity to get advice or obtain help. Across England and the Scotland, there is a large amount of volunteers and there are also about one thousand of employees prepared to give a hand in need. Current government provides donation annually and also attempts to provide as much funding as possible. Different campaigns are carried out to achieve an objective – to end the housing crisis. [31]

5 NEW DIRECTIONS: 1979 – 1997 AND AFTER 1997

5.1 From Public Sector Housing to Social Housing

The winner of the election in 1979 was the Conservative Party. This Conservative government had a large number of changes in its programme, which were to be implemented in a consistent manner. The very first step in a field of housing was a demand to create a new set of standards and it was designed by the RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) and by the Institute of Housing. As the local authorities did not appear to make any further progress in housing, “the government passed responsibility for building new rented housing from local authorities to housing associations that became “Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). Public sector housing became social housing, and was defined as

“housing provided by an organisation which allocates accommodation on the basis of need”. [32]

5.1.1 Right-To-Buy

A constitutive element of the Conservatives policy for social housing was the right-to-buy legislation. Dissimilar to Labour government, Tories promoted home ownership which could enable families to possess their homes and to make them feel responsibility both for their dwellings and for their lives. This step gave people some sort of courage and the right-to-buy greatly succeeded. Because of the very favourable prices which laid below the market value of the real estate, there “had been sold over 200,000 council houses” [33] within 1982. And next 800,000 dwellings had been sold by 1986. [34] Since then, a number of people living in public sector have fallen and it has stabilized with its 21 per cent who are accommodated in the social housing now.

5.1.2 Crime and Riots

Since certain housing estates started to decay, crime and anti-social behaviour were increasing in the process. The African-Caribbean immigrants who had arrived in Britain in previous decades [35] and who were settled in Brixton (Lambeth, South London) faced economic problems such as unemployment. These were the main factors contributing to riots. The *Guardian* gave a very faithful description of the Brixton riot in its article. The *Guardian* interviewed a serious number of witnesses of the action who lived near to the venue, the blacks and the whites. Both police officers and African-Caribbean inhabitants were sure about an unfriendly atmosphere, a hard situation in the area and they also expected it would develop into a serious social affair. [36] Another riot took place in Toxteth (Liverpool) and Moss Side (Manchester). The government efforts were to rebuild or reconstruct

the most dilapidated estates. Furthermore, it was believed that as smaller groups of people are more integrated, relationships amongst them are more tight and closer. People who do not live in an impersonal world of injustice are trusted to be capable of refining their homes and the immediate environment. The Church of England published *Faith in the City* in 1985 in which this idea was endorsed. [37] On the basis of the recommendations, necessary proceedings were done. The first step was to make people responsible for their homes and the environment; hence the privatisation was done. When people had their homes in possession, they became more responsible. The next step meant to improve dwellings, the estates with tower blocks first of all. New houses were built according to Parker Morris standards and warranted sufficient size of the rooms in flats and in maisonettes. There were built new homes, ordinarily low-rise. High-rise were not built no more to serve as a home.

The following three subchapters deal with the proceedings in detail.

5.1.3 Privatisation

In order to brighten the outlook of the 1980s housing situation, the government, with a leader of Conservative Party – Margaret Thatcher as a Prime Minister, managed to push a bill of privatisation through the house. The first enterprise was seen in 1981, when The Priority Estates Project was introduced. The PEP has begun to collaborate with statutory and voluntary agencies, in addition to local communities. [38] The architects were asked to plan a remake of estates, including improvement of the environment, living conditions, and related to this sphere they were also asked to provide home security and safety. The modernisation was a long process and some estates were demolished to be replaced with the low-rise dwellings, some of them were transmuted to housing for elderly people to provide a shelter to them.

Rebuilding was one side of the coin, but the social behaviour was clearly another.

5.1.4 *Utopia on Trial* and Crime Reduction

Even if people were given new chance to live better, their efforts to find and keep a job and met with difficulty. Moreover, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher supported heartily the ideas highlighted in a book *Utopia on Trial: Vision and Reality in Planned Housing*, written by Alice Coleman, published in 1985. [39] The writer went into more than 100,000 houses mainly in Southwark and Tower Hamlets and furthermore, she concluded that people were clearly happier in housing which related to streets and where the space around had a measure of defensibility and surveillance. The use of through roads rather than culs-de-sacs would reduce crime. [40] After the extensive study, Mrs. Coleman was authorised to apply these opinions in practise and she started her work in estates situated in Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Westminster. [41] The newly reconstructed estates became more permeable, airier and more comfortable for the tenants. [42]

5.1.5 Housing Act 1988

In addition, Housing Action Trusts emerged as another step of Housing Act 1988. These were short-life organisations whose main goal was to implement a number of projects; for example, establishment of a voting system, when the tenants were given a chance to vote for a particular landlord, namely a local housing association, or a local authority, moreover, “to protect the long-term sustainability of the physical and socio-economic regeneration measures.” [43] The longest period of Housing Action Trust was kept in Stonebridge (Brent, London) and its closure date passed in August 2007. [44] Therefore, in addition to electoral system, tenants were offered to purchase their home.

The statistics shows, that: “Between 1979 and 1987, more than a sixth of the total stock of council houses was sold and between 1979 and 1994 the share of the total housing stock owned by local councils fell from nearly a third to little more than a fifth.” [45]

5.1.6 Homeless expansion

The situation caused by the public policy resulted in difficulties of poor people who were on a low income and were not able to afford buying their own dwelling. Private sector started to rent and on the other hand, people who proved they could not afford the rent were given the right to require benefit from the Department of Social Security. [46] Also, there were a number of cases when the tenants were not able to pay off a mortgage and hence, the lending institutions took over the property and the tenants became homeless. Especially young people were affected by homelessness as they tended to start living away from their parents at an early age and usually did not have a stable employment. [47]

6 BRITISH PRESS PORTRAYAL OF THE CURRENT HOUSING ISSUES IN BRITAIN

6.1 Social Housing from the Perspective of The *Guardian*

Social housing is a very frequently discussed topic throughout *The Guardian*. A large number of the news readers participate in discussions below the articles and they develop the topic into some circumstantial details. The readers give their opinions on the topic; they release their emotions so they give birth to the inimitable melange of their estimations and their attitudes. Readers' comments go to thousands.

6.1.1 Housing Associations

Housing associations, also known as “Registered Social Landlords or Private Registered Providers of Social Housing” [48], are non-profitable organisations which provide housing to people on a low income or to people who hurt for some extra benefit. Generally, a process begins with applying for a home; than the applicant is put on the waiting list and then he is asked to wait until some dwelling is available to be moved in. The time of waiting may be long and exhausting because there is usually operated a points system which reflects “people’s level of deprivation” [49]. This scheme was launched by the government in 2010 and it has been labelled as the ‘choice-based lettings’. According to *Social lettings tables: 2010 to 2011*, 87 per cent of England local authorities participated in this scheme by 1 April 2011. [50]

6.1.1.1 Commercial Ventures

The Guardian renders some additional information about a demeanour of housing associations as i.e. branching out into new commercial areas for the purpose of cross-subsidising their work. [51]

The activity of housing associations gets larger and this makes concerns to The Homes and Communities Agency which has decided to establish a commercial venture control. The misgivings of the controlling machinery stem from the recent problems of company doing student housing business. The tenants and the inhabitants of the country may be assured that the national agency protects a functionality of the housing associations.

6.1.1.2 Housing Associations' Warning

Communication among housing associations and their tenants proved to be extraordinarily difficult sometimes. As a recent article showed, it is similar to balancing on the edge. Welfare reform caused the housing associations to provide sort of an announcement which would inform the tenants about the changes concerning the impact on their everyday life. This message was seen as inappropriate, "patronizing, offensive and suggested they were unable to budget." [52] The basic idea was that tenant would do better if he or she avoided non-essential activities, i.e. buying cigarettes, playing bingo, drinking alcohol, etc. for they would not lose their homes. This saying aroused a scandal among the readers of the Eastland Newsletter. After serious tenant protests, the housing association apologized and furthermore it promised not to use such a clumsy language next time. The goal of the message was to inform people about the housing associations' help in a field of housing when it was needed. On the other hand, there also exist the landlords who prefer face-to-face contact with their tenants and when there is some change, i.e. the bedroom tax, he meets tenant deputies and share the message with them firstly and then the deputies spread the information around the fellow tenants. A divergence of opinions is commonplace but the communication is getting better at these days. Unlike the situation amongst the tenants which goes from bad to worse. The bedroom tax, as

it is known in general, affected a large number of families and cut them off the part of their housing benefit. The press let their readers to uncover the council tenant testimonies, stories and related difficulties. [53] A lack of money and joblessness bring an overall indebtedness and ensuing repayment to the housing associations. A vicious cycle is causing problems which sometimes end up with depression or with the hopelessness. [54] [55]

6.1.2 New Welfare System Pilot Schemes

The government has initiated pilot schemes with a target to make observations how tenants are able to handle with their money. Until recently, housing benefit was sent directly to housing associations. According to new welfare system, housing benefit will be paid firstly to tenants. This measure should rise up tenants' financial awareness which consequently triggers greater responsibility and family stability. Moreover, "the Department for Work and Pension (DWP) insists that direct payments will simplify the welfare system." [56] Nevertheless, a pure idea seems to have a different ending. Recent figures show that during last four months, when the money were disbursed directly to tenants, the change led to "arrears of more than £600,000 for the housing providers involved." [57] The universal credit system pilot also proved that only 316 tenants from total 6,220 tested people were impeccable in paying their housing benefit payment in time.

Below the article, a large number of comments [58] were added and all of them showed the tenants preference to return to the old scheme. The government's wish hardly corresponds to peoples' rooted behaviour. Two parts are unfortunately missing each other in this case.

6.1.3 Northern Housing Crisis

Housing in the Northern England differs from the housing in the Southern England locations. As described in *The Guardian*, a policy of housing planning was distinguished for decades by building big houses for families, which seems to be problematic now because of the changed policy. [59] Families which refuse to pay bedroom tax have to choose moving to smaller dwellings, if there were any in The Northern England. But unfortunately, the situation viewed by *The Guardian* proved that these smaller homes are not numerous hence it is difficult to find any alternative accommodation. The problem of a lack of homes for those on the waiting list which the government believes to solve with a big 'moving action' does not seem to be thought out. Furthermore, Monica Burns, *The Guardian* Professional, claims that poverty is to deepen as it is hard to find a job in the area of the north. [60] Generally, the south of England is more wealthy than the north of the country.

Another article related to housing is written by a journalist who comes with a task whether the housing associations can afford to cover the market. [61] Some housing associations chose to build new homes. The main target is to sell them. There are two types of buyers. At first, people who are the first-time buyers, as i.e. young couples who find a cheaper accommodation, and who are supported by the Help-to-Buy scheme. Another type of people is those who buy some home and then they rent it. They are known as private rent sector investors. Help-to-buy scheme helps to buyers as an extra £130 billion mortgage credit has been created by the government. The opinions differ whether the housing associations should intervene to housing market or not. A predominating opinion is that housing associations should be capable to accommodate homeless people and people who need some extra help and maybe after this core service, they could think of becoming a part of the housing

market. When joining the housing market, they should take in consideration that Greater London housing market is less risky than the housing market in the north of the country. Furthermore, it is not clear if newly built homes in the north would be a good investment as the Northerners often do not dispose of big property. [62] [63]

6.1.4 Lack of Land across the United Kingdom

The current need for more and more affordable housing may be perceived across *The Guardian*. The government tends to build new homes for the increasing population of Britons. The most difficult seems to make a decision where to build the homes. Tories repeatedly refuse to build up new huge estates which were with so much effort eliminated in the 1980s by the government. A sense of stronger community when being accommodated in small scale localities are strongly enforced by the current government. More than 80 per cent of Tories councillors who were polled by ComRes are persuaded that the very close environment of their homes are overdeveloped at the moment, so the next development of house building in their areas are not possible. The Tories are attacked for being a step backward when valuing environmental safeguards. Moreover, a large number of homeowners do not support the idea of mass house building in the rural areas. *The Guardian* provides data that there is not enough of a vacant land in Britain and when there is any, it is in the poorer north of the country, and where the need for them does not seem to be necessary. As the most job opportunities are settled in the South-West and in the Greater London. [64] [65]

6.2 Housing from the Perspective of The *Daily Telegraph*

6.2.1 Target Group of Readers and Property Issues

The right-wing newspaper The *Daily Telegraph* is published with the aim of attracting the most middle-class readers and ordinary people with conservative thinking. After reading a large number of The *Daily Telegraph* articles which were dedicated to housing topic, it was seen that the majority of the topics covered with neither the housing crisis nor the social housing. The articles were rather focused on property issues. To explain this phenomena more clearly it is necessary to mention, there were several different categories in The *Daily Telegraph*, namely Property News, Green Property, Property Club, Renovating and DIY, Luxury Homes and United Kingdom Property Search together with the Overseas Property Search. [66]

6.2.1.1 Different Sections of *The Daily Telegraph*

For better understanding to each of the section mentioned above there is a short description of the main characteristic. The first *Daily Telegraphs'* column called *Property News* offers the articles about the most interesting housing related topics within the United Kingdom and the World. There may be found the news from Tokyo, Venezuela, Britain and from other parts of the world. The news concerning state budget for housing can be found here.

A column labelled *Green Property* gives advice on transforming someone house into an ethical and sustainable living space. [67] Topics as eco living, eco homes, green living are discussed here largely as these are popular nowadays. Moreover, middle-class people who read the articles are interested in such topics because their sense of eco thinking starts in eating habits and continues to housing and further.

Property Club is the richest section of *The Daily Telegraph's* property sections. It is a place which brings readers the latest news, statistics and offers for landlords and property investors, plus tips from home-buying guru Phil Spencer [68] who is well-known within the United Kingdom because of his book *How To Buy Your First Home*. There is good evidence that the target reader come up with different type of everyday problems in comparison with *The Guardian* readers.

Another section called *Renovating and DIY* gives advice to homeowners who want to sell or rent their property how to improve their house's value on the market.

Luxury Homes as the title reveals, offers the latest news and features on luxury property, from glamorous city apartments to perfect country homes. [69] The houses and castles from all over the world are discussed in the section and the architect comments are followed by extraordinary pictures.

In conclusion, two last sections provide the property retrieval across the country and across the Overseas. Closely connected to this section is also the *Period Property* which is a source for the latest news and advice on period and historical properties. [70]

6.2.2 Bedroom Tax as viewed by *The Daily Telegraph*

A new approach towards the bedroom tax issue has been offered by *The Daily Telegraph*. Despite negative messages which occur everywhere in the broadcast, in spite of *The Guardians'* complaints, *The Daily Telegraph* came up with a an upbeat article which is full of leading Labour MPs' positive assurance and the recommendations to the landlords. A sense of feeling for the poorest people was supported by Frank Field (Labour MP), who stated that the changes to housing benefits

are grossly unfair and added that council landlords should take direct action against them. A constructive solution might be to brick up the doors to spare bedrooms or to knock down the walls for the tenants feel more free and safe from the bedroom tax. [71] Another difference from The *Guardian* articles was that there was the additional information about the rooms which are classified as bedroom. Not all the box rooms are necessarily spare rooms. The next what was mentioned in the article was that the pensioners are exempted from the bedroom tax. Good news for elderly people. Furthermore, the families which will be affected by the bedroom tax can find some advice released by the Work and Pension Minister, i.e. to take some extra working hours, swap to smaller house, or to take extra lodger. The information was clearly portrayed, the exceptions were clearly defined and the solution was given in The *Daily Telegraph*.

To the contrary, The *Guardian* provides a large number of social tenants' life stories. The poverty-stricken tenants describe their housing problems, furthermore they describe their way of life, how much money they possess or how big/small is their kitchen or their bedroom, how many children sleep together in a common bedroom and how difficult it is to manage thorough homework with their children because of a lack of space. The bedroom tax is analysed in two different ways according to the newspaper. [72] [73] [74]

6.2.3 Living Green and Co-Housing on the Increase

Before presenting information on co-housing, one important thing has to be said. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the 1980s Government championed the policy of home ownership and the privatisation. The action taken by the Government led to creating small groups of people, friendly neighbourhood, pleasant environment, strong families

and sense of responsibility. It was believed that people living like this would give birth to the strong society. Margaret Thatcher once said that there was no such thing as a society; there were only individuals and families. [75] The recommendations of these times seem to be very up-to-date in 2010s as a growth in co-housing has rapidly increased in the last two years. Co-housing means various families get together via common way of life, similar way of thinking, ecology and the friendship. There have been about 14 co-housing groups in recent years but next 40 co-housing groups have been established during last three years. [76] People who get together to live in co-housing communities are similar to Israelis living in their kibbutzes. They both share the idea of prospering community life, they share laundry rooms, they have strong respect for nature and environment, and that is why they prefer to live in ecological friendly homes. A life in community provides a large number of benefits. People are in a company of friends, nobody feels abandoned, a common work in the garden heals depression, there is no waste in energy, and people help one another and socialise during the social events or the workshops.

All features above mentioned are regarded as significant and very effective cure for happy life. The houses are often very different from those of traditional British architecture. Their design is more modernist and also more intelligent. Some houses are built from a prefabricated straw bale building system which provides an excellent insulation and cuts down expenses. A central heating system is also much cherished. An example of such a community is Lilac in Bramley, west Leeds. Other co-housing communities are situated in Lancaster, Bristol, Sheffield, or in Cambridgeshire. [77] [78] [79] [80] [81] [82] [83]

6.2.4 Property Club

The housing market in Britain consists of more than 25 million domestic dwellings. The majority of them are in the private sector, with 68 per cent being owner-occupied and 11 per cent rented out by private landlords. [84] As published in *The Daily Telegraph* there were 1.9 million tenants living in privately rented property a decade before, and the figure is 3.6 million today. [85] The number of people living in rented homes is on increase because they are not able to buy their own. It shows that the situation is favourable to start the start of leasing. Moreover, a considerable impact on the events taking place in Britain has had undoubtedly an American writer Robert Kiyosaki. With his book *Rich Dad Poor Dad* launched in the Britain's market he seems to be responsible for many people becoming interested in the property investments and letting procedures. [86] When there are enough people in Britain who own their homes and who have some extra money, they can invest for they gain more wealth, more stability in everyday life. To become a landlord and to start renting flat or house, or just a spare room (to students for example) is a great means of some extra income. With some extra money, the family may secure first-rate education to their children, a comfortable home, security and a good background. A number of private landlords are on a continuous increase. When examining *The Daily Telegraph's* Property Club it is seen that the articles published in this section are focused on the buy-to-let market, on the landlords and on the property investors. Current housing issues concern with the task how to make one's buy-to-let profitable, or, it can be found there the 'top ten tips' how to become a landlord [87] and when one becomes a member of the Property Club, he or she is given a number of advice from the other landlords, i.e. the landlords share their investment strategies with the other members. It is important to say, that the Daily

Telegraph Property Club has been launched in February 2013 and is free to join. The main purpose is to encourage, to support and to inform an increasing number of new landlords. [88] [89] [90] [91] [92] [93] [94]

6.2.5 Luxury Homes and Period Property

The latest news show that there is a large number of luxury properties in Britain which is ready to buy. Wealthy bidders are free to choose whether to buy some swish flat, period property, rural cottage or a Christopher Wren's house (See Appendix IV). An interesting thing is that the articles, concerning with the luxury properties and which can be found in the *Daily Telegraph*, create an extraordinary outline of a prosperous traditional Britain, whereas a majority of luxury homes originate in the last centuries. The Coneygree property reconstructed in mid 1730s serves as a good example of a dreamlike housing (See Appendix V). A sense of sentimentality is maintained in people as a perfect image of the earlier times of prosperity and also the times of a power of the United Kingdom. As the article comments an excellent offer of the Sir Christopher Wren's house, there also begins sort of a mysterious house history unveil. [95] Reading the article does not serve only to inform shortly its audience about a great bargain, the author of the article rather wants the readers to stop for a minute. The author of the article never omits any interesting details, he goes through the life of the architect, through the royal family importance, and moreover through the exceptionality of the building. [96] People simply like stories like these mentioned above. The readers of The *Daily Telegraph* ordinarily have a sense of respect to the Royal Family who has always been connected to period property. Conservative readers are highly interested in what is connected with a traditional art as countryside cottages (See Appendix VI), former Edwardian homes, homes with blue plaques which were lived by personalities like famous writer Oscar Wilde (See Appendix VII),

inventor and engineer Sir Henry Bessemer, a printmaker, whose work is exhibited in Tate Gallery, Sir Frank Short, short-story writer, poet and novelist Rudyard Kipling, Henry Wood (See Appendix VIII) or George Orwell. [97] The information provided are optimistic, nice, light and give the reader chance to escape from their busy life, stereotype, troubles and difficulties. In comparison with the exacting and cheerless articles written by The *Guardian* professionals, the articles published by The *Daily Telegraph* are the opposite. As the high price of luxury dwelling remains resilient, the people's dream of them never ends up.

6.3 Housing from the Perspective of The *Independent*

6.3.1 Moving Out Of London

A trend to move from London has started years before and it still keeps on continuing. People usually move out because of cheaper houses or flats and when they want to change their style of life. [98] People moving away from London find the information about where to settle down throughout the Internet. The articles and the blogs are usually very helpful. [99] One blog published by The *Independent* is titled "Life After London" and a mentor of this project is called Belinda Aspinall. The project has for its goal to connect the people living outside London to those people who live in London and who consequently consider moving out of the city. Another aim of this blog is to provide as much useful information as possible. [100] People are free to ask about any aspect of life in the countryside or in the town. Belinda Aspinall herself released a guide in which she mentioned why it is better to stay in London when considering children development. It is important to mention a number of the apposite examples by way of illustration. It was found out that people living in London do more walking because the schools, the shops, and the other different types of services like the library, the hairdresser, the

bank, or the hospital are closer to be reached by simple walk. In contrast, using of a car in the rural England is necessary for the further commuting. Otherwise, the commuting in London may be done by public transport which is well arranged during all week. Furthermore, parents can teach their children to discover some new places, the history of the country, when visiting the museums. The architecture can be discovered as well as a number of the most known buildings with a historical value. Furthermore, children who live in the city may take advantage of a number of different types of activities, i.e. the sport activities (ballet, rugby, boxing etc.), the school of music, the school of art, or the theatre club. During the weekends, the Londoners may take part in sport matches; they can visit the playgrounds or the art galleries. [The offer of activities is not so extensive in the countryside, but the visits of the parks are also good. Because of a large number of immigrants in Britain, it is appropriate to teach children how to behave in a contact with them or how to maintain the relations among them in everyday life. As London is a very multicultural city, it is not unique to live in the street next to people of different cultures. [101] For example, there exists a peripheral district called Purley, whose parish organizes for its residents a multicultural mass with an accompanying programme, i.e. dancing, tasting of food prepared by people of different cultures, every year. It is a great opportunity to know each other, to make contacts and to live subsequently in the friendship neighbourhoods. Every year, there come more and more people to join the mass. And what can be better for living than the content and the healthy human relationships. To recapitulate it in short, living a life in London represents a positive experience if one is settled down in a good district. [102] The biggest problem many Britons have to confront to is finding an affordable and a suitable home. Many Britons move from one district to another. They change a size of a property for they were able to pay off a mortgage. [103] [104] It is not

unusual to remove many times in Briton's live. People change residence from diverse reasons, i.e. because of the age of their children – to find the most suitable school for them; they move because of the change of an employment – due to the related change of income; a family can move to cheaper/more expensive area in dependence on the situation. [105] [106] [107] [108] [109] [110]

6.3.2 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Countryside

To live in the countryside seems to be a dream of every Briton. Britons love nature, they also love the gardening or the birds watching and some other activities which are closely connected with the open-air areas. A number of surveys concerning the best place to be lived in are done every year. There is also a category where the worst places for living are uncovered and consequently awarded the worst price called “Carbuncle Award” by the *Urban Realm* magazine.

For the year 2013, the most beautiful countryside was found in the South. The *Independent* published the article called ‘Beautiful South wipes out Wales, Scotland and North in countryside poll of rural districts with highest living standards’. [111] The South of England, The East of England and also the Home Counties were found to have a low crime rate, provide good health, and affordable housing also. The figures were interesting as they showed that some towns besides better living conditions, closer relationships, more accessible forest, better school exam results, had the employment almost 80 per cent and 97 per cent of the residents were healthy. Waverley was a shining example of a prosperous place. Furthermore, its residents had higher incomes than the Britain average was. The residents of Waverly earned about per week £280 more than in the rest of the Britain. It was found that Scotland had a low population density, and also a low crime rate. It was rated highly;

otherwise, the most dismal awarded town was in Scotland. It was rated badly for its lack of shops and ugly desolate dwellings. Wales was not found interesting according to survey at all. The best rural livings were titled these in The South-East, The East of England and in The East Midlands. [112][113]

7 CONCLUSION

The first aim of the thesis was to understand how the social housing has developed since WWII and it was discovered that the social housing went through the first period of prosperity in 1950s, 1960s, when preponderance of Britons were mostly content tenants of the council housing. The situation turned towards the opposite state after the privatisation in 1980s when people were given an opportunity to buy their homes below the market price. As a large number of them took the opportunity, the number of people who are in social housing now is some 21 per cent.

For the second goal of this thesis it has been intended to identify the main housing problems people of different social classes face. Tenants of social housing face a lack of social houses, the waiting list also cause them problems due to the long waiting period of time before obtaining the home needed. Obtaining the demanded size of flat is difficult. The very current problem discussed in all the newspapers is so called bedroom tax. It has recently been established by David Cameron's government that families with a spare room will receive less money – via the housing benefits. The first middle-class homebuyers face high prices of homes and they are forced to take out a mortgage and to pay it off for decades. They also have to count that prices of homes in London are higher than in the rest of the country.

The next aim of the thesis was to understand what the current housing trends are and it was concluded that the general preference is for homes as closely connected to nature and the ground as possible. There was found a hostility to high-rise buildings and to tower-blocks. The Royal Institute of British Architects closely

cooperates with the British government and it manages to enforce a design of houses according to Britons' common taste. No more high-rise are built; the old buildings which are not awarded Grade II listed status are often demolished and the new incurred areas are replaced with low-rise dwellings. It was noticed that more and more people establish associations, called co-housing. They become members of the community which has a strong sense of ecological thinking, sense of friendship and tight relationships; hence they prefer to live in ecological friendly homes and they build them by themselves.

The next research objective was to establish how the housing in north of the United Kingdom differs from the housing in south of the United Kingdom, which area is wealthier. It was found out the northern areas of the United Kingdom are cheaper and mostly with a neglected appearance. The south of the country is wealthier and the local properties are more valuable.

The final aim of the research was to find out how the three newspapers differ in their style of writing according to their political orientation and according to their content. The left-wing orientated *The Guardian* predominantly writes about the social housing; topic of living for privileged wealthy people is not discussed at all. The articles are very activist and full of focus on people on benefits and people who are dependent on the state help. On the contrary, *The Daily Telegraph* writes mainly about the topics for the middle-class people; providing an extraordinary amount of luxury property news and the topic like social housing are discussed rarely, when this happens, a description of the problem is given in detail and is more objective (due to the opinions of both, the left-wing and the right-wing leaders). *The Independent* as a centre orientated newspaper focuses mostly

on trends of housing. Its content is full of topics which should help to people decide whether it is better to live in city or in the countryside. Therefore, it can be concluded that in the coverage of the topic of housing, the newspapers showed consistency with their political orientation.

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10 ABSTRACT

The key objective of the bachelor thesis is to reflect current housing issues in Britain and the development of housing since 1945 until present. The bachelor thesis is divided into two main parts. It is provided a layout of the essential political and social events which have affected the current housing in Britain, in the theoretical part. The research part provides an analysis of three British journals with a different political focus (left-wing, right-wing and centre). Besides the article analysis, the thesis is focused on the comparison of the journals from the perspective of content and its formal aspect.

11 RESUMÉ

Hlavním cílem této bakalářské práce je reflektovat dění v oblasti současného bydlení v Británii a jeho vývoj v období od konce druhé světové války až do současnosti. Bakalářská práce je rozdělena do dvou částí. V teoretické části je pojednáno o stěžejních politických a společenských událostech, které měly vliv na současnou podobu bydlení v Británii. V praktické části práce je provedena analýza tří britských seriózních deníků s různým politickým zaměřením (levice, pravice, střed). Vedle analýzy článků jednotlivých periodik je v praktické části zahrnuto také porovnání jednotlivých periodik mezi sebou jak po obsahové stránce, tak po stránce formální.

12 APPENDICES

Appendix I

Hallfield Primary School: 1950s: Concept. In: *Education In A Modern World* [online]. 2011 [cit. 2013-04-22]. Available from: <http://www.architecture.com/LibraryDrawingsAndPhotographs/OnlineWorkshops/EducationInAModernWorld/15HallfieldConcept.aspx>

Appendix II (Part A, Part B)

The Downfall of British Modernist Architecture. In: VERLAAN, Tim. *Failed Architecture: A Research Project into the Causes of Urban Failure* [online]. 15 April, 2011 [cit. 2013-04-22]. Available from: <http://failedarchitecture.com/2011/04/the-downfall-of-british-modernist-architecture/>

Appendix III

WHEELER, Brian. What future for social housing?. In: *BBC: News: UK Politics* [online]. 4 August 2011 [cit. 2013-04-22]. Available from: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-14380936>

Appendix IV

DE QUETTEVILLE, Harry. Sir Christopher Wren's house – yours for £4.25m. In: *The Daily Telegraph* [online]. 06 Apr 2013 [cit. 2013-04-23]. Available from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/property/periodproperty/9971464/Sir-Christopher-Wrens-house-yours-for-4.25m.html>

Appendix V

Britain's best listed buildings for sale: Coneygree, Lincolnshire. In: *The Daily Telegraph* [online]. 2013 [cit. 2013-04-23]. Available from:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/property/periodproperty/9821700/Britains-best-listed-buildings-for-sale.html?frame=2460010>

Appendix VI

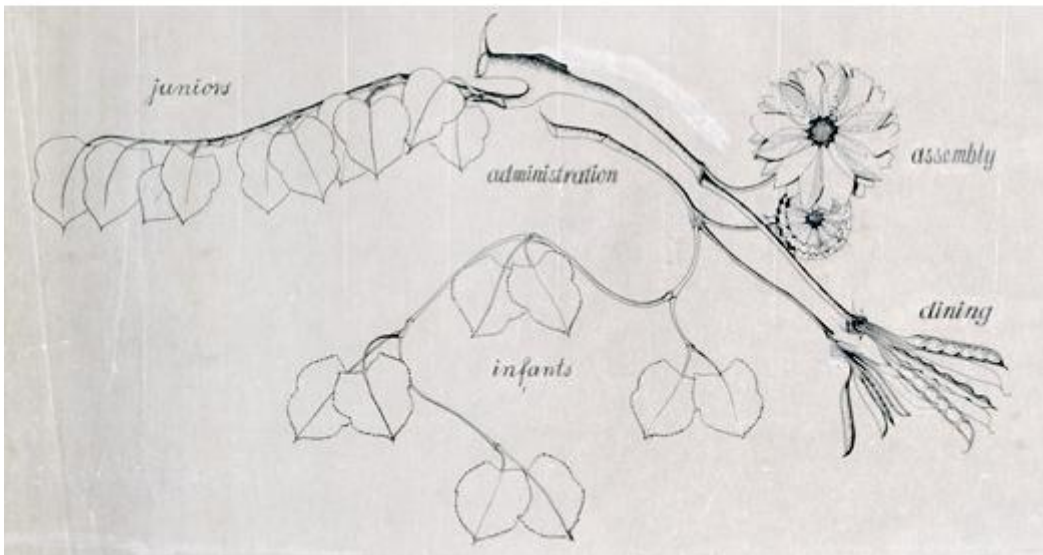
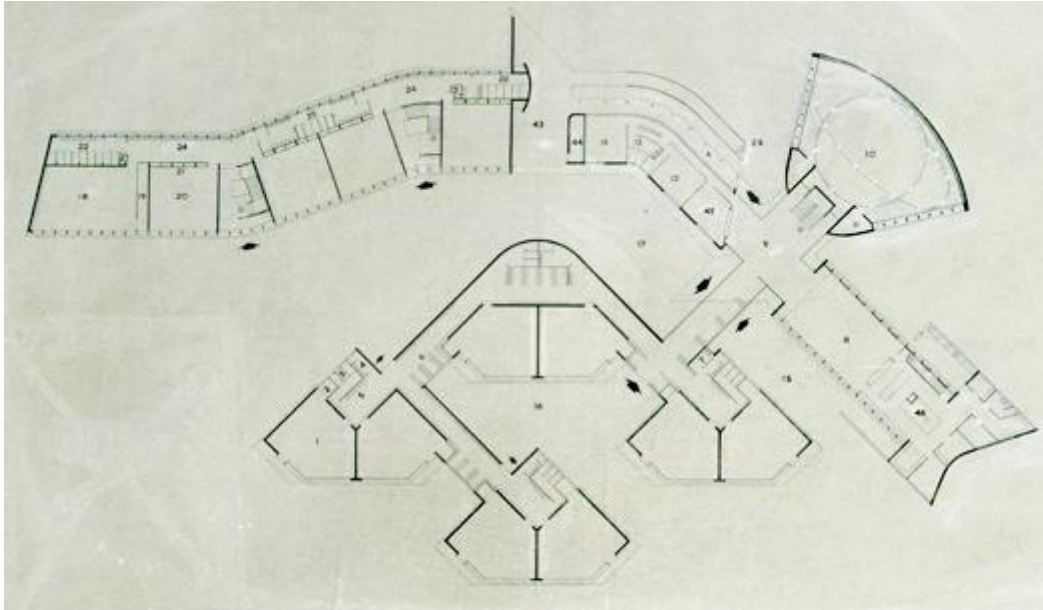
Britain's best listed buildings for sale. In: *The Daily Telegraph* [online]. 2013 [cit. 2013-04-23]. Available from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/property/periodproperty/9821700/Britains-best-listed-buildings-for-sale.html?frame=2459975>

Appendix VII

Homes for sale with blue plaques. In: *The Daily Telegraph* [online]. 2013 [cit. 2013-04-23]. Available from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/property/periodproperty/9821880/Homes-for-sale-with-blue-plaques.html?frame=2460159>

Appendix VIII

Homes for sale with blue plaques. In: *The Daily Telegraph* [online]. 2013 [cit. 2013-04-23]. Available from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/property/periodproperty/9821880/Homes-for-sale-with-blue-plaques.html?frame=2460160>

Appendix I**Name:** Hallfield Primary School, 1950s: Concept**Description:** *Design for Hallfield Primary School, Paddington, London: Ground floor plan (top) and explanatory site plan showing the school as natural plant forms (bottom).*

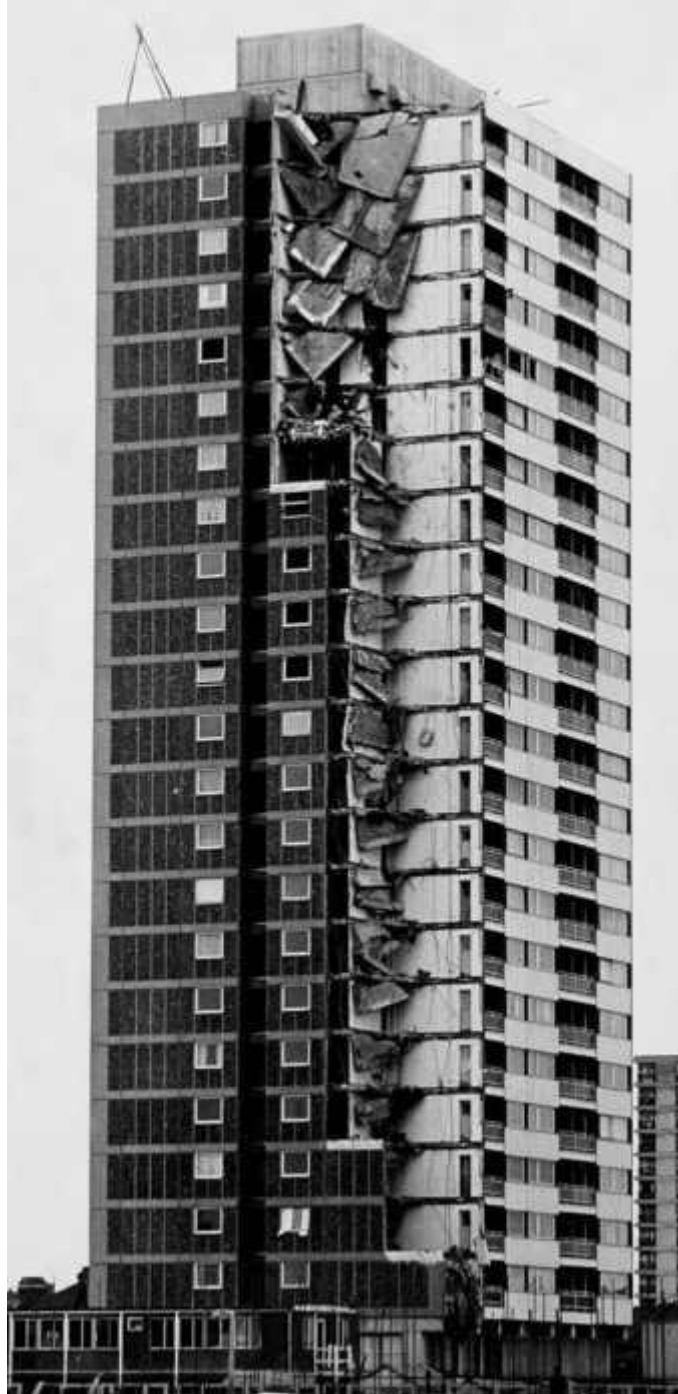
Appendix II, Part A**Name:** Ronan Point following the explosion

Description: On the 16th of May 1968 a gas explosion led to the collapse of an entire corner of the recently opened Ronan Point council estate in Newham, East London. The responsible council tenant, Ivy Hodge, set off a domino effect of buckling flats by trying to light her stove in her 18th floor apartment. While Miss Hodge miraculously survived, four others died and seventeen were injured.



Appendix II, Part B**Name:** Ronan Point following the explosion

Description: The gas explosion caused blow out the flank walls, which supported the floors situated above. A local architect discovered that the weakness was in the joints connecting the vertical walls to the floor slabs. Lack of quality control led construction workers to fill the joints with newspapers, instead of concrete.

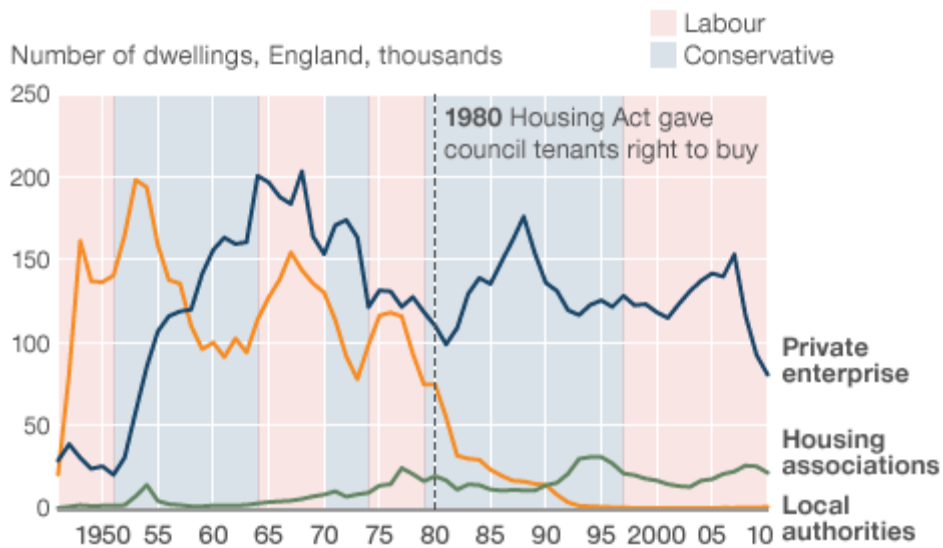


Appendix III

Name: New homes built by the private and social sectors (graph)

Description: *The graph shows how a number of new dwellings built by private enterprises, housing associations and by local authorities fluctuated in a period of time (1950s – 2010). Red and blue columns stand for Labour tenure (Red) and Conservative (Blue) tenure. In the post-war period, there is a large increase of new homes built by local authorities. A development of local authorities building is on a decrease in a long-term point of view. On the contrary, private enterprises and housing associations remain a continual increase of building in a long-term point of view.*

New homes built by the private and social sectors



Source: Dept for Communities and Local Government

Appendix IV**Name:** Sir Christopher Wren's house

Description: *Impressive Sir Christopher Wren's house. It is for sale for the first time. Its earliest features date to the early 16th century, when it formed part of the complex around Cardinal Wolsey's newly-built Hampton Court that was appropriated by Henry VIII. Price: £4.25m.*



Appendix V**Name:** Coneygree, Lincolnshire

Description: *Probably constructed in the mid 1730s, with its distinctive high chimney stacks and decorative stone work added later. Grade II listed, with a garden gazebo and gateway also having separate listed status. Price: £695,000*



Appendix VI**Name:** Burleigh Cottage, Devon**Description:** *Grade II listed three-bedroom cottage. Price: £550,000,*

Appendix VII

Name: Oscar Wilde's House, Tite Street, Chelsea, London

Description: *This one-bedroom flat near The Royal Hospital Chelsea comes with impeccable literary credentials. It was home to Oscar Wilde between 1884 and 1895, his most productive period, during which time he wrote *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*. The area's appeal for young socialites hasn't dimmed since: there are still bars and restaurants aplenty. Price: £1.15m*



Appendix VIII

Name: Brookhouse Farm, Greenmount, Manchester

Description: *Dating from the early 17th century, this five-bedroom farmhouse comes with an attached barn and cottage. A blue plaque on the wall commemorates the life of Henry Wood, who fought with Oliver Cromwell against Charles I, and was imprisoned for years for his Quaker faith. The house has been extensively modernised. Price: £995,000*

