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Localism in Good and Hard Times

Contribution to GTI Forum [Think Globally, Act Locally?](#)

Frank Fischer

Localism, in my view, is not about giving priority to the local. The issue is rather about the need to bring it more fully back into the fold. Localism was from the outset basic to the environmental movement, with writers such as Murray Bookchin, Kirkpatrick Sale, and Rudolf Bahro advocating regionalism, communes, and ecovillages. This orientation was seen as anything but a retreat from wider social and environmental struggles. Bookchin, for example, saw it as a way to begin taking back power from the unsustainable center. His confederal/libertarian municipalism, as Brian Tokar underscores, was put forward as a strategy to “challenge parochialism, encourage interdependence, and build a genuine counterpower to dominant institutions” from where “the growth imperative of capitalism” could be radically challenged.

Similarly, Bahro, who established and lived in an ecovillage, was a founder of the German Green Party, which came to have a long reach beyond the local level. A tireless opponent of the global capitalist “megamachine,” he saw the eco-commune as the “germ-cell” of a new social form that could eventually replace the existing bureaucratic state.

Reasserting the Local

As environmentalism shifted the struggle—necessarily—to global environmental politics, localism took a back seat in environmental thinking. As the crisis is global, so the argument goes, the solutions have to be global. Although the local dimension didn’t disappear altogether, it lost its luster as attention turned to the global stage. Only later, when the failures of national and global efforts started to become apparent, did a growing number of people start to think

seriously again about the local. The emphasis turned mainly to the role of cities as the front line of climate crisis, especially to mitigate the consequences.

We all live locally, whether in urban or rural localities. Our local home thus needs to be an essential part of the larger ecological system. While there is a growing literature that rediscovers the importance of the local level, much of it unfortunately conceptualizes the local as a subsystem of the global system. This is not entirely wrong, but it fails to recognize that the local is more than just a delivery system for programs from above. It has a life of its own, a dynamic independent of the global system.

Localism, to be sure, has a long history, having been advocated in our time by ecologists such as E. F. Schumacher, Wendell Berry, and Bookchin. Such writers have emphasized the many promises associated with localism—sense of place, community, conviviality, local culture, identity, local production, food networks, self-sufficiency, local political control, face-to-face discussions, participatory democracy, and more. It is also an important site for environmental action and implementation of sustainability. An emphasis on local communities and the role of their activists has always been an essential part of the theory of sustainable development, even if it has all-too-often only received lip service.

But these are promises with no guarantees. Developing a viable form of localism does not just happen because it is local. Local communities can be narrow-minded, provincial, socially oppressive, unjust, corrupt, and undemocratic. In this regard, the politics of relocalization can be understood as a variant of the general struggle for political and environmental change. Realizing the promises depends on particular conditions, commitments, and hard work on the part of citizens and activists.

Localism beyond the Dichotomy

The argument that localization walks away from global environmental politics is, in my experience, wrong. While there are always exceptions, localists, especially those following in the aforementioned traditions, broadly recognize the need for global action. Most local thinkers and activists do not see this as an either/or. We all are situated somewhere locally, as he points out, and this position is an important source of initiative and action. As the Transition Town and

ecovillage movements have shown, local action is flexible. Local places are where people can get personally involved with their neighbors and, as Rob Hopkins, founder of the Transition movement, put it, roll up their sleeves and start “doing stuff.” In the process, they often become activated, even sometimes radicalized. Part of that engagement is learning to understand the connections between local and the global spaces. Helping climate refugees find local shelter easily leads to active concerns about global warming. Such involvement, moreover, works to counter the fact that the average citizen sees the global as distant, something to read about in the newspaper, something for international elites and experts to deal with.

Localism for Hard Times

There is yet another dimension to the relocalization movement that is overlooked. I think it is unlikely in the time available that we will be able to avoid major disasters, if not outright collapse. The “Great Unraveling” is a topic that many are reluctant to talk about, comfortably situated academics in particular. People prefer to emphasize the positive rather than the negative, which one can understand. But, in my view, it is time to look the probable disasters of the crisis in the face. Confronting a downward spiral, large numbers of people will need ideas and practical knowledge about how to deal with the desperate circumstances in which they find themselves. The need to act will then overshadow theoretical discussions about global transition. Localism in its various forms, especially the ecovillage movement, speaks very directly to this need for viable alternatives.

History shows that people faced with the consequences of crisis at the center seek to escape by returning to the land, both to flee social and political turmoil and to feed themselves. In the future, just as in the past, growing numbers of people will be forced to leave unlivable cities and head for the land. For many, this will be more a matter of hard necessity than a question of choice. Desperate people will be in a search of ways to cope with the hardships that will come with climate disasters, if not simply to survive. Today we can see signs of such movement in European countries such as Greece which have confronted extremely severe financial hardships and high levels of unemployment. The phenomenon is also evident in wide parts of Eastern Europe still struggling to deal with post-Soviet transition.

Many find it advantageous to move back to the land with their families and friends, where they can cooperatively grow their own food, in many cases to achieve a basic level of subsistence. Most urban dwellers, in the advanced industrial world in any case, know little or nothing about living on the land, including the knowledge necessary to grow their own food. But hungry people will learn, even if not overnight. This is where a range of alternative forms of living can be significant, in particular those organized around sustainable farming and the communal life of the ecovillage. We find here people who have already been experimenting with new and old ways to do things, similar to what Hopkins has referred to as the "Great Reskilling." They have developed a wealth of local knowledge that is readily transferable to people confronting climate-related hardships. This includes practical knowledge about living well with less material stuff, but also a large amount of social knowledge about communal living, collective learning, sharing income, and making decisions by participatory democracy, none of which are easy under any circumstances. The members of ecovillages are fully aware of what is ahead and the need to provide useful information to hard pressed people, a concern they discuss quite often. They understand themselves as developing knowledge that can be passed along as lessons to those looking for new ways to organize their lives, especially people fleeing climate disasters.

For me, this is one of the places where progressive theorizing meets concrete practical action. It was for this reason that I previously suggested that we pay more attention to these critically important experiments in localism. This does mean that these activities are a substitute for global struggle. The goal is rather to build stronger connections between the local and the global. A sustainable transition needs both efforts. [Chella Rajan](#) is right when he argues that people-environment interactions require conjoined actions between both levels of governance. This means that an effective strategy, as [Helena Norberg-Hodge](#) puts it, has to be both bottom-up and top-down at the same time.

About the Author



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Article

The *Kleinhaus* and the Politics of Localism in German Architecture and Planning, c. 1910

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Abstract

As an antidote to the substandard tenement apartment, the ideal of the “small house” (*Kleinhaus*) was ubiquitous in housing debates in Germany before World War One. Denoting a modestly sized two-story family house aligned with the street, it had its origins in the Middle Ages, during which it was constructed to serve the humble domestic needs of urban craftsmen who lived and worked in thriving trade cities including Lübeck, Bremen, Hamburg, Augsburg, Nuremberg, and Ulm. For modern promoters of low-density alternatives to the tenement, the *Kleinhaus* was an ideal model for mass appropriation. Unlike foreign and untranslatable dwelling models like the “villa” and the “cottage,” the *Kleinhaus* conveyed something that was both urban and quintessentially Germanic. It was thus enlisted by housing reformers to strengthen local cultural identity whilst raising the standards of the nation’s housing stock. This article examines the significance of the *Kleinhaus* in fostering dialogue between the fields of architecture and planning, and considers its embeddedness in a wider project of cultural nationalism in pre-war Germany.

Keywords

affordable housing; architectural typology; cottage; family; Germany; Heimat; localism; nationalism; photography; urban design

Issue

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1. Introduction

After stumbling off the main road of Glockengießerstrasse and encountering them in a narrow alley, one could be forgiven for momentarily forgetting one’s urban location in the center of Lübeck’s old town (Figure 1). Unified by a plain coat of whitewash and a generous pitched roof, these alley houses exemplified a residential type that by the early 20th century came to be known as the “small house” (*Kleinhaus*). The *Kleinhaus* typically described a house of no more than two stories, which could be detached, duplex, or terraced, but which was easily recognizable as a self-contained single-family unit by the presence of three windows and a separate entry that was aligned directly with the street—usually a cozy residential path concealed from the main traffic artery. Clad in brick or plaster and featuring a shingled pitched roof with

dormers and a chimney, its exterior was necessarily modest and contained minimal ornamentation. The exemplary *Kleinhaus* was likewise economical in plan, featuring usually no more than four rooms, with a combined kitchen and living room as the locus of family life on the ground floor and separate bedrooms for parents and children on the upper floor. It sometimes contained a small private garden with a stable to accommodate a few chickens and perhaps even a goat (Behrendt, 1916, pp. 210–212).

Relics of late medieval and early modern planning, residential quarters of *Kleinhäuser* (“small houses”) could still easily be found in historic trade cities like Lübeck, Bremen, Hamburg, Augsburg, Nuremberg, and Ulm in the late 19th century, even after frequent outbreaks of cholera led many reformers to decry their presence in the name of public health. They received

renewed appreciation in the first decade of the 20th century, initially amongst art historians and conservative promoters of heritage protection, but increasingly amongst urban reformers and architects who saw in the *Kleinhaus* an ideal dwelling type that could provide a more locally-inflected solution to the much debated “housing question.” By examining the presence of the *Kleinhaus* in housing debates, this article establishes the turn to localism as a constitutive feature of German architectural modernism and the nascent field of planning. From its historical rediscovery to its codification in planning, the *Kleinhaus* became a powerful nationalistic tool to reinscribe traditional values of the family and community into the fabric of modern urban society.



Figure 1. Residential lane off Glockengießerstraße 41–3, Lübeck, constructed in 1612. Source: “Gandorps Gang – Hof” [Gandorps Gang – Courtyard] (1925), © Bildarchiv Foto Marburg.

2. Discovering *Heimat*

Late 19th-century German architectural culture can largely be characterized by the growth of national self-consciousness and a widespread desire to rediscover historical building and applied arts traditions. From the work of amateur photographers to anthropologists, efforts to document and codify national dwelling styles were widespread and engaged diverse layers of the population. In these efforts, Germany was certainly not alone. Amongst the nations of Central Europe keen to shed the influence of French academicism, the discovery of

national folkloric artifacts, such as simple houses and their material contents, proved to be a widespread phenomenon in the larger global process of nation-building (Baycroft & Hopkin, 2012). In Germany, the localism movement was encapsulated in the pervasive term “*Heimat*” (homeland). While the term still largely holds connotations of nostalgia and mourning over the loss of cultural tradition, historians have nonetheless shown it to be an ideologically multivalent phenomenon that helped German citizens construct a national identity based on cultural pluralism and regional heterogeneity (Applegate, 1990). The *Heimat* movement left its most tangible mark on literature, painting, music, and indeed architecture, but its influence in German society ran much deeper, shaping debates ranging from environmental protection to the design of school curriculum (Blackbourn & Retallack, 2007; Jenkins, 2003; Rollins, 1997).

In the sphere of architectural history, a growing body of literature has established the pervasiveness of localist thinking amongst modern German architects and urbanists (Jerram, 2007; Lampugnani & Schneider, 1992; Rousset, in press; Umbach, 2009). From “national romanticism” to “architectural nationalism” to “vernacular modernism,” present architectural historiography offers a wealth of conceptualizations that have generated nuanced perspectives on German society’s hunger for tradition in the late 19th century and beyond (Miller-Lane, 2000; Schwarzer, 2016; Umbach & Hüppauf, 2005). However, the influence of *Heimat* in the spheres of housing and urban planning is less understood—perhaps because the term “mass housing” is habitually taken in architecture to mean houses that aesthetically express a modernizing process of social abstraction that devours traditional social order and the possibility of placeness. Yet, when the professional discipline of planning (*Städtebau*) was born in Germany in the early 20th century, it was, from the beginning, deeply committed to the study of traditional local social housing models that could act as design prompts for new urban developments.

Photography quickly became the favored tool for documenting local architecture amongst amateur *Heimat* enthusiasts and heritage professionals alike (Joschke & Brown, 2012). Beginning in the 1880s with the founding of the field of “house research” (*Hausforschung*), books on pre-modern northern European dwelling cultures were rife but were largely limited to reproducing diagrams, drawings, and old artworks depicting traditional dwellings (see, e.g., Essenwein, 1892; Stiehl, 1908). Architectural photography was already well established in Europe, especially in France and England via programs to document national monuments, especially churches (Ackerman, 2002). The increased use of the magic lantern projector in educational departments in art history across Europe and the United States at the end of the 19th century created wide markets for photographic slides depicting works of art and architecture. A student of art historian Herman Grimm (among

the first to integrate slides into art history lectures), the photographer and art historian Franz Stoedtner amassed a huge collection of photographic slides from his travels around Germany. In 1895, he established the Institute for the Science of Projection Photography (Institut für wissenschaftliche Projektionsphotographie), an agency specializing in art and architecture slides for reproduction in lectures and publications (the collection now forms the core of the Bildarchiv Foto Marburg; Buchkremer, 2013, pp. 386–387).

One of Stoedtner’s most popular collections dealt exclusively with the new field of urban design (*Städtebaukunst*). This collection included around 800 photographs of old urban maps, artistic panoramas, and original photographs of historic city streets. Where the Austrian art teacher Camillo Sitte traveled to Italy to hand-sketch piazzas from watchtowers in order to write his famed handbook on city planning (Lampugnani, 2009, p. 26; Sitte, 1889), with the help of Stoedtner’s and other similar collections, books on urban design history could be written at a rapid pace. This new genre of documentary photography turned old German cities into sites of important lessons for young architects. Notions of authenticity and *genius loci* in architecture were hitherto typically attached to rural farmhouses that spoke to what was perceived to be the heart of the nation—the peasantry (Redensek, 2017). The growth of an urban design photographic archive cultivated new interest in buildings that captured the activities of a thriving class of urban merchants and craftsmen who forged Germany’s path into the early modern world.

The simultaneous invention of halftone printing in the 1890s allowed photographs to be printed cheaply and effectively alongside text, and a market quickly emerged for photographic books on local urban building traditions. The two best-known books were undeniably architect and conservative ideologue

Paul Schultze-Naumburg’s volume *Kulturarbeiten: Der Städtebau* [Cultural Works: City Planning] (1906) and architect Paul Mebes’s (1908) *Um 1800* [Around 1800]. Both collections celebrated the modest, matter-of-fact style of middle-class domestic architecture that characterized early 19-century German cities. The three-volume *Die schöne deutsche Stadt* [Beautiful German Cities] (Baum, 1912; Wolf, 1911, 1913) utilized a wealth of materials amassed from slide agencies, heritage protection enthusiasts, and amateur photographers to offer a wide-ranging survey of simple domestic building traditions dating back to the Middle Ages. The goal of these and similar volumes was to extend popular appreciation for *Heimat*, but also to train the architect’s eye in identifying classic Sittean urban design principles, including picturesque grouping and enclosed intimate streets. These books were not intended to be encyclopaedic or especially historically rigorous. Their textual contents offered little in the way of art-historical precision, typically eschewing details like construction dates, builder names, styles, and building types. They were principally designed for readers to immerse themselves in the images and intuit from them a modern spirit of objectivity.

A handful of old philanthropic residential complexes emerged in photographic urban design literature as exemplary models for new housing construction. At the onset of the early modern world, philanthropic housing arose in response to the growing financial wealth of patricians in German trading cities, whose religious sense of obligation drove them to establish foundations to serve the lower stratum of urban society (Tietz-Strödel, 1982, pp. 6–26). Popular in the Hanseatic cities of Hamburg, Bremen, and Lübeck were “dwelling corridors” (*Wohngänge*), that could be found tucked away in narrow block interiors (Figure 2; Kohlmorgen, 1982). They typically housed widows of merchants and boatsmen

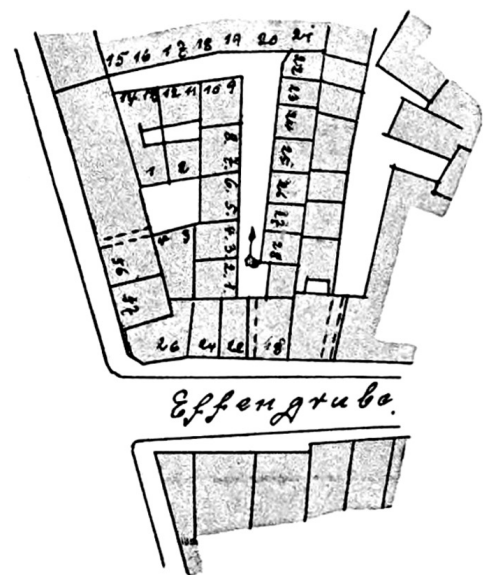


Figure 2. Photograph and plan of Blohmsgang dwelling corridor in Lübeck. Source: Harms (1907, plate 86).

and were named in honor of their wealthy donors. Lübeck boasted the best-preserved dwelling corridors (Bruns, 1920, pp. 38–40), including Glandorps Hof (1612) and Füchtings Hof (1649).

Modern critics considered these dwelling corridors to be exemplary works of socially-relevant urban design: They were suitably economical to reflect the modest means of their occupants, but likewise picturesque and cozy in their interiority and subtle positioning off the busy traffic road (Behrendt, 1916, pp. 216–220; Wolf, 1913). Built ad-hoc as infill in the block interior, these spaces might not appear to differ much from the notorious tenement block courtyards that characterized densely populated cities like Berlin. But in the eyes of reformers, philanthropic dwelling corridors were more than mere empty voids. Lined with flower beds and sitting benches where neighbors could gossip, they were imbued with rhythm and character. A personal ground-level entry into each two-story house offered a humane scale and individualizing element for residents, while the houses' positioning in united rows gave the complex a transpersonal feeling, avoiding the bourgeois tendency for individual aggrandizement through elaborate ornamental features. As one critic noted in reference to Füchtings Hof, the dwelling corridor felt like a city within a city, forming a "little realm of its own" (Bruns, 1920, p. 38).

Images of other notable housing complexes in Ulm and Nuremberg built to accommodate single families were also circulated via Stoedtner's collection, further capturing the aesthetic of the socially-informed row house type. Built in 1488 to accommodate the families of Swabian fustian weavers brought in to bolster the city's textile trade (Schnelbögl, 1961), the Nuremberg housing complex aptly named "Seven Rows" (*Sieben Zeilen*; Figure 3) featured rows of three small two-story dwellings with entries located on quieter lanes off the main streets, which could serve as play areas for chil-

dren. It is not difficult to speculate on what modern observers might have been expected to learn through Seven Rows: While suitably integrated into the existing cityscape, they appear distinctly ready-made, offering a glimpse of what contextually-sensitive standardized and rationalized modern housing might look like. A 1620 project in Ulm that provided housing for families of the city's militia was also significant (Figure 4). This project absorbed many of the tactics of Lübeck's ad-hoc corridors in a more systematized and standardized fashion, integrating the principle of the quiet residential street into an entire housing quarter, in effect developing the modern notion of the residential community or "neighborhood unit." The architecture follows a familiar formula, with the austerity of the plain-coated exterior offset by generously pitched roofs that assert a distinctly domestic feeling.

The Fuggerei housing complex in Augsburg garnered the most attention in urban design literature (Figure 5; Baum, 1912, p. 113; Schultze-Naumburg, 1906, p. 62). Established in 1516 by the notable Fugger banking family and carried out by the master-builder Thomas Krebs, it provided cheap rental accommodation for the city's poor craftsmen and their families. Containing 52 single-family dwellings, the residential complex brought together many notable principles that account for its positive reception amongst early 20th-century planners (Tietz-Strödel, 1982, p. 48). The layout of its free-standing rows conveyed a modern attitude of good economy, modest means, and mass standardization, while two gated entries (locked every evening) gave the complex a closed-off and communal spirit. More innovatively, it accommodated back gardens for each house, ensuring privacy and a degree of self-sufficiency for every family. Its dwelling plans were also highly rationalized. Local Augsburg historian Joseph Weidenbacher identified three main types of dwellings in the Fuggerei, ranging from dwellings with a kitchen and two rooms to



Figure 3. Left: Photograph of Nuremberg's Seven Rows. Right: Map highlighting the Seven Rows. Sources: "Sieben Zeilen" [Seven Rows] (1918, © Bildarchiv Foto Marburg) and Kuhn (1921, p. 102).



Figure 4. Left and center: Photographs of Ulm’s militia housing quarter from the collection of Franz Stoedtner. Right: Map highlighting Ulm’s militia housing on the border of the city wall. Sources: “Soldatenhäuser” [Soldiers’ Housing] (1900, © Bildarchiv Foto Marburg) and Kuhn (1921, p. 105).

dwelling with a kitchen, chamber, and three rooms. Guided by the “innate benevolent spirit” and “working ethos” of the Fuggerei family, the economical rationale that underpinned the Fuggerei, for Weidenbacher (1918), made it an ideal model for new workers’ housing.

The Fuggerei was also socially significant because it was the first philanthropic entity to be bound to an independent housing foundation rather than to an existing religious body (Adam, 2016, p. 3). Unlike the housing projects in Ulm or Nuremberg, it did not serve a particular civic institution or trade. While philanthropic housing across Europe in the early modern era typically served single people whose circumstances caused them to seek institutional aid (such as widows, nuns, or the sick) the Fuggerei purely served families by virtue of their work-

ing ethos and belonging to the city. As such, the housing complex was unique in operating as a preventative mechanism that symbolically placed the secular institution of the family at the heart of modern urban society.

3. Terming the *Kleinhaus*

The housing models cited above reflected values that ran contrary to established planning practice in Germany. Since the publication of German planner Josef Stübben’s canonical handbook *Der Städtebau* [City Planning] in 1890, the field of planning expressed little concern for housing design, remaining devoted to issues of street traffic and hygiene. In imitation of Haussmann’s Paris, Stübben promoted a schematic Baroque aesthetic as a

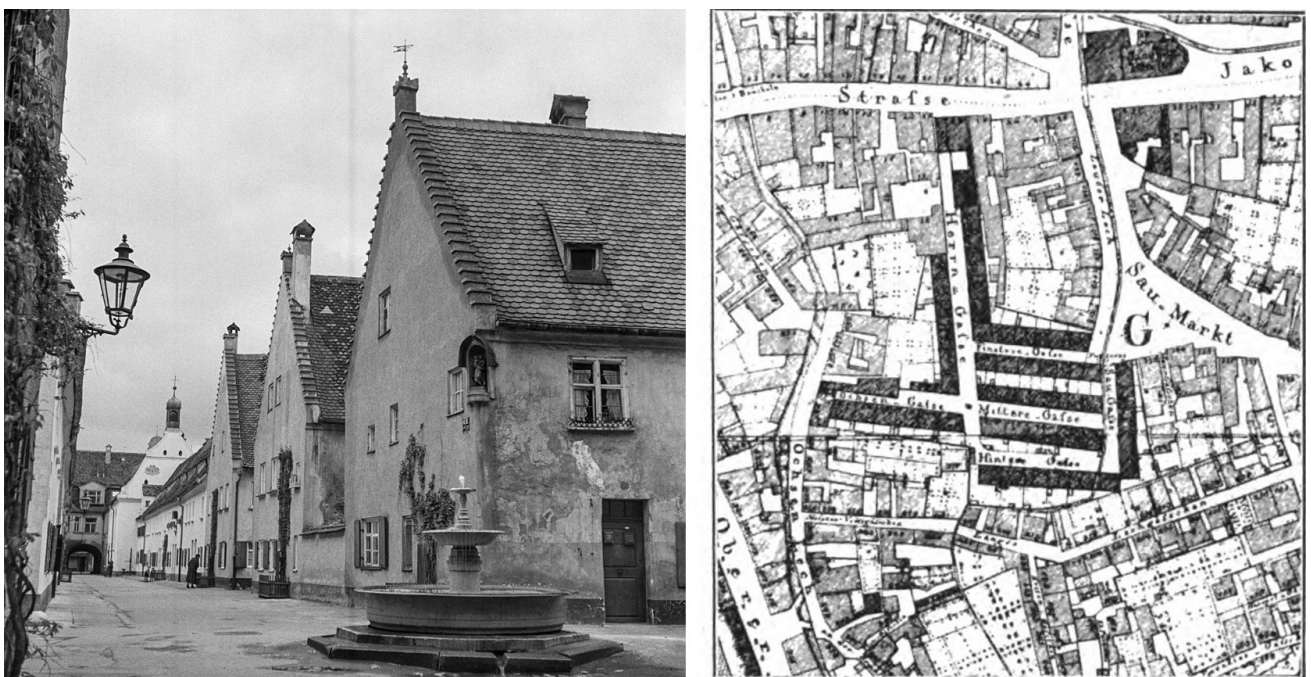


Figure 5. Left: Photograph depicting a street in the Fuggerei. Right: Map highlighting the plan of the Fuggerei. Sources: Aufsberg (1939, © Bildarchiv Foto Marburg/Lala Aufsberg) and Kuhn (1921, p. 105).

template for urban renewal in Germany, which *Heimat*-inspired urbanists described disparagingly as a “cult of the street.” The image of Paris as an emblem of cultural modernity would soon be challenged by the increasing influence of the English garden city movement in Germany, which brought housing to the center of debate. Planners Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker’s urban designs for the garden suburbs of Letchworth and Hampstead, which incorporated low-density, low-rise small houses inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement, were praised by German architects like Hermann Muthesius for their sensitivity to context and local tradition (Eberstadt, 1909a; Muthesius, 1904–5/1979).

If critics like Muthesius praised the typological clarity of the “English house” and proposed it as an ideal suburban vernacular, a comparable “German house” still awaited discovery (Stalder, 2008). Founded in 1903 by German architect Theodor Goecke and Sitte (who died before the first issue’s release), the journal *Der Städtebau* became a vital organ for reporting on English developments, provoking debate about how international garden city ideals could adapt to local conditions. In a message to their readers in the journal’s inaugural issue, Goecke and Sitte declared that, amongst other tasks such as regulating traffic, providing healthy and comfortable dwellings, and accommodating industry, a chief goal of the nascent field of urban planning was to nurture a “true love of *Heimat*” (1904, p. 1).

While not one to wax lyrical about the beauty of his native town (the city of Worms), the economist Rudolf Eberstadt became a central figure in promoting a localist ethic in city planning circles, whilst recognizing the need to systematize knowledge of house forms in ways practicable for planning authorities. Eberstadt’s influential *Handbuch des Wohnungswesens und der Wohnungsfrage* [Handbook for Housing and the Housing Question] (1909b) proved critical in giving terminological precision to housing forms at the intersection of architectural and planning cultures. Prior to the handbook’s publication, there existed no term in the German language that could be considered akin to the now-prevalent English term “housing,” used to describe a relatively autonomous field of knowledge. The term *Wohnung* (dwelling) was most frequently used in political, statistical, and social-scientific fields to describe the household unit. The emergence of the *Wohnungsfrage* (literally the “dwellings question”) in the late 19th century was largely limited to the arena of political debate between bourgeois reformists over how best to balance economical demands with concerns to improve the moral lives of the lower classes (Bernhardt, 1998; Bullock & Read, 1985; Kastorff-Viehmann, 1979).

Eberstadt offered a progressive voice on the housing question, sympathizing with the working classes and emphasizing the need for comprehensive planning to curb private speculation. At the same time, he betrayed a more typical bourgeois conservatism in his willingness to draw sharp lines between the normal and the patho-

logical to explain housing conditions. In the introduction, he explained that:

The science of dwelling circumstances has, like medicine, its physiology and its pathology; it is an investigation of normal and abnormal conditions; it must recognize and acknowledge both. The investigation of the general normal conditions is the job of housing [*Wohnungswesen*, literally “the business of dwelling”]; the understanding and explanation of individual anomalous, unsatisfactory, sick conditions is the area of the housing question [*Wohnungsfrage*]....The housing question and housing have thus the same external area in common, but their methods and goals are different. The science of housing has, as I would like to define here, the goal of realizing the best conditions for the production, use, and assessment of human dwelling. (Eberstadt, 1910, pp. 1–2)

In his efforts to establish housing as a rigorous science, Eberstadt developed a typo-morphological approach that would become a mainstay in urban design research, providing urban street, block, and dwelling typologies that could standardize communication across the architectural and planning fields (Albrecht & Zurfluh, 2019; Claessens, 2004). Historical research formed a crucial part of this approach. In the first section of the *Handbook*, Eberstadt traced the evolution of small housing construction back to Antiquity. His cultural frame of reference was narrow, idealizing the archetypal two-story, three-window house that served rapidly growing urban communities across the Germanic lands from the 12th century onwards, which he termed the *Kleinhaus* (although none from this century survived).

While this term was hitherto occasionally (and ambiguously) used in late 19th-century housing literature simply to describe a small dwelling detached on all sides, analogous to the English “cottage,” in Eberstadt’s hands, it came to be infused with a sense of stylistic clarity, aesthetic purpose, and national historical fate. Emphasizing close ties between this simple, schematic house type and the socio-economic context of homeownership and urban belonging, the economist went as far as to suggest that its introduction was of “far-reaching importance” to the political and economic development of the middle-classes during the Middle Ages (Eberstadt, 1910, p. 41).

In another sub-section on the “Artistic consideration of house forms,” Eberstadt reproduced the *Kleinhaus* model copiously in photographs of a handful of still-surviving pre-modern philanthropic complexes, including Augsburg’s Fuggerei, Lübeck’s dwelling corridors, and Ulm’s militia housing—models which he held to be ideal (Eberstadt, 1910, pp. 204–211). As cities of declining economic importance and increasing touristic value in the 19th century, the sense of longing for *Heimat* is palpable in their visual presence in the *Handbook*. At the same

time, they betray a somewhat patronizing gaze on the modest lifestyles of the traditional underclasses. Many of the houses reproduced in the *Handbook* appeared derelict, bearing significant resemblance to the back-to-back terraces that were simultaneously being condemned in England for their poor ventilation. Hygienic concerns aside, for Eberstadt these models told a story of historical continuity and gradual organizational perfection according to the distinct social requirements of the hard-working family. As such, they reflected more than poor housing—they encapsulated a reformist impulse that was authentically middle-class in its aspirations to eschew outward ostentation and strive for autonomy, familial comfort, and privacy.

As a house form that could be detached, duplex, or terraced, the *Kleinhaus* as an ideal “normal” dwelling challenged the established hierarchy of values in the housing debate that positioned the economic value of the high-density tenement model against the moral and hygienic value of the low-density cottage model. Defining the healthy dwelling became less a matter of density and more a matter of historical authenticity and conventionalism. Typo-morphological correctness according to historical precedent would naturally bring all external factors shaping the healthy dwelling into equilibrium. The architectural merit of a house was defined by its capacity to render its social content legible. Tenement buildings, Eberstadt argued, were not capable of developing their own artistic sensibility. They could be covered with columns and caryatids and “still appear much uglier because they appear more untrue. The dwelling house must express its purpose, to belong to the person, to offer him freedom, security and possession, and only where these conditions are fulfilled

can the external form become artistically well designed” (Eberstadt, 1910, p. 257). To illustrate his point, Eberstadt reproduced an image of a typical tenement building beside a complex of *Kleinhäuser* (Figure 6). The differences for readers of the *Handbook* were intended to be stark: On the left stood a façade shielding an indiscriminate mass of living space; on the right stood houses that demonstrated full correspondence between social content and exterior form.

After Eberstadt’s *Handbook*, images of rustic pitched roofs and picturesque streets went from being scattered fragments appreciated strictly by *Heimat* enthusiasts to concrete strategies in the urban planner’s toolbox. Underlying the pragmatism of this endeavor lay a deeper impulse to fashion myths about the long-durée of modern social housing—a history structured by the secularization of the philanthropic institution and the rise of global trade cities in the early modern world. By privileging the *Kleinhaus* as the standard for “normal” modern housing conditions, the *Handbook* placed the historical autonomy of the traditional urban middle-classes at the center of an urban design agenda in Germany, whilst making this house form operative in responding to the logic of future metropolitan growth. In contrast to the planning of the tenement city as a veritable Potemkin village, modern urban planning became a matter of grasping how the “big city” (*Großstadt*) as an organism interacted with the *Kleinhaus* as its most basic cell.

4. Fabricating the *Kleinhaus*

In the decade following the publication of the *Handbook*, the term *Kleinhaus* became ubiquitous in architectural and planning discourse. As the closest thing to a national



Figure 6. Comparison of an apartment complex and a row of *Kleinhäuser*. Source: Eberstadt (1910, p. 259).

type, it came to express the same level of stylistic clarity and sense of middle-class virtue as the “English house” (Breuer, 1914; Former, 1912; Muthesius, 1918). Much like the English house, the problem posed by the *Kleinhaus* was that of finding a balance between monotonous standardization and the saccharine picturesqueness of typical *Heimat* art. In his post-war handbook *Kleinhaus und Kleinsiedlung* [Kleinhaus and Small Settlement], Muthesius (1918, p. 227) argued that the *Kleinhaus*, as an organically evolved object, “recalls the perfection that our machines, weapons, and airplanes experience through continued progress in manufacture.” He assured his readers that the monotony created out of its progressive standardization—from its window frames to its floor plan—would necessarily be tempered when adapted to local (*örtlich*) idiom, and would thus never be boring (1918, p. 224–231).

Muthesius singled out a few large housing projects, including the garden cities of Hellerau and Staaken, as chief representatives of modern *Kleinhaus* construction. These garden cities successfully evoked the romantic image of the small town in their architectural conventions (albeit largely perverting traditional examples through their weakened social connections to the city). Founded in 1908 and financially aided by the Hellerau Building Cooperative, the Hellerau garden city, just outside of Dresden, provided cheap rent or homeownership to the working and lower-middle classes. Likely for the purposes of cost and heating insulation, nearly all construction in Hellerau consisted of low-rise row houses. Architect Heinrich Tessenow produced the most infamous designs in his contribution to Hellerau, stripping the *Kleinhaus* back to its essential elements as a lesson

in middle-class self-restraint (Ekici, 2013). Other contributions by notable architects Georg Metzendorf, Richard Riemerschmid, Muthesius, and Kurt Frick emphasized the more local traditionalistic elements of the *Kleinhaus* model (Figure 7), incorporating eyelid dormers and rustic roof shingles and shutters.

While the balance between asceticism and romanticism proved delicate amongst the architects involved, all of the houses in Hellerau encapsulated the social ethos underpinning the historical *Kleinhaus* model in their commitment to achieving a rationalism and conciseness in floor plan. All emanated an enclosed and complete familial existence between their four walls. Muthesius’s floor plans demonstrated a rationalized coordination of rooms according to the needs of the family, recalling the typification processes that guided the design of the Fuggerei. These plans featured all the conventional elements of family living, including the scullery, water closet, kitchen-cum-living room (*Wohnküche*), a separate living room on the ground floor, and the parents’ bedroom and separate children’s bedrooms according to gender on the upper floor (Figure 8). The private gardens attached to Muthesius’s dwellings were also distinctly no-fuss and practical, containing stables for livestock.

Constructed by the Imperial Office of the Interior (*Reichsamt des Innern*) to house local factory workers in munition production, the Staaken colony near Spandau, Berlin (1914–1917) by architect Paul Schmitthenner was an ambitious experiment in floor plan standardization (right down to its door handles; Oppenheimer, 1917, p. 8). It featured just five variations in plan across 800 dwellings, all of which were modest in size but featured a generous kitchen-cum-living room as the central



Figure 7. Photograph of Riemerschmid’s housing group on the street “Am grünen Zipfel.” Source: Breuer (1911, p. 458).

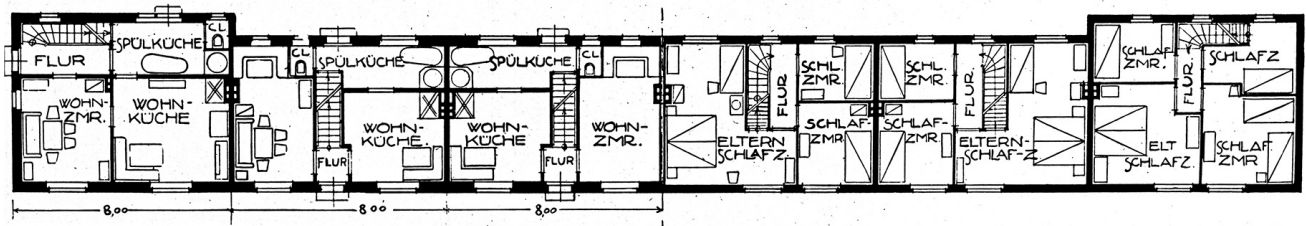


Figure 8. Muthesius' floor plans for a housing group in Hellerau, 1909. From the collection of Franz Stodtner. Source: "Grundriß der Häusergruppe "Beim Gräbchen" in Hellerau" [Plan of a housing group "Beim Gräbchen" in Hellerau] (1909), © Bildarchiv Foto Marburg.

family hearth and a private yard big enough for live-stock (Voigt, 2012, p. 18). Schmitthenner's various façade designs cited traditional decorative features of northern German old towns, from a Dutch gabled Baroque style to a more restrained classicism (Figure 9). Far from turning the colony into a pastiche of historical quotation, the overriding pragmatic demands of the *Kleinhaus* as a basic socio-aesthetic model kept them homey but restrained. Equally significant was the incorporation of artistic urban design principles, such as gates that enclosed streets and reasserted an interior-like character—in effect relocating Sittean principles from the church and square to the residential community as the new locus of civic life.



Figure 9. Schmitthenner's housing on the street "Zwischen den Giebeln" in the Staaken garden city, Spandau, Berlin. Source: Vorsteher (1978), © Bildarchiv Foto Marburg/Dieter Vorsteher.

For conservative critics, Staaken successfully captured the civic spirit of the traditional Brandenburg village without feeling imitative (Schmitz, 1919; Stahl, 1917).

Further west, architect Hugo Wagner's designs for workers' housing near Bremen (Maraun, 1995) were similarly praised by architectural critics for incorporating a rustic local idiom whilst reflecting a modernist sensibility through their commitment to decorative restraint and uniformity. Wagner was a vocal promoter of the movement for *Heimat* protection (*Heimatschutz*) in Bremen, and traditionalist critics positioned his work within an organic lineage of authentic northern German *Kleinhaus* construction (Eberstadt, 1910, pp. 254–255; Högg, 1909; Seeßelberg & Lindner, 1909). His private projects, which included cheap and rustic duplex housing in the workers' colonies of Einswarden (1908) and Burg-Grambke (1910; Figure 10), might have easily been mistaken for surviving remnants of an early housing foundation project. The strictness of their uniform façades was offset by alternations of densities and gable configurations that gave rhythm and variety to the streetscape. Wagner's standardized floor plan designs played an equally reformist role in providing a generous kitchen-cum-living room to serve as a family hearth (Figure 11). Family-oriented reformists praised the adjoined ventilated stove and sink area, which maintained health standards whilst enabling the housewife to sufficiently oversee household activity (Kelm, 1911, p. 142).

While all of these modern emulations of the *Kleinhaus* interpreted the model differently according to local tradition, what united them was a shared commitment to standardize the floor plan based on what they perceived to be the glue holding urban society together: the family hearth. In his praise of new suburban developments including Hellerau and Staaken, critic Walter Curt Behrendt maintained that the "kitchen forms the real center of family traffic in the *Kleinhaus*. Here the housewife controls, the children play, the meals are taken, the family is brought together around the 'domestic hearth' during the free hours of the evening, like the times of the old German middle-class houses [*Bürgerhauses*]" (1916, p. 208). In its ability to mold the worker into an upright citizen, Behrendt (1916, p. 228) argued that the suburban *Kleinhaus*, with its hearth and vegetable patch, "creates a bond that binds the population to the soil of the fatherland once more."



Figure 10. Wagner’s housing for workers in Burg-Grambke, Bremen, 1910. From the collection of Franz Stoedtner. Source: “Arbeiterkolonie” [Workers’ Colony] (n.d.), © Bildarchiv Foto Marburg.

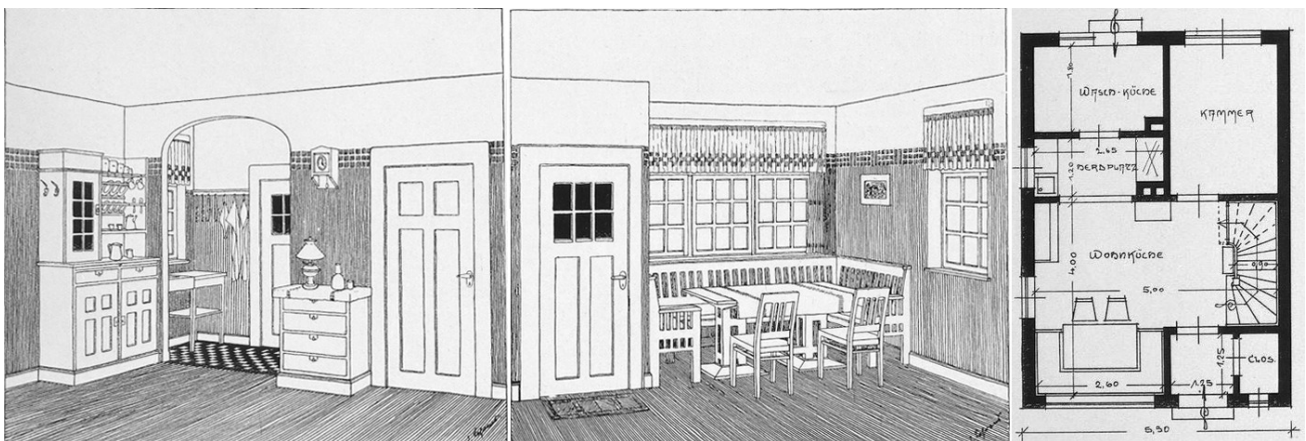


Figure 11. Wagner, Lotz, and Schacht’s designs for the workers’ colony of Einswarden, Bremen. Left and center illustrates the kitchen-cum-living room and right illustrates the floor plan. Source: Seeßelberg and Lindner (1909, p. 45).

5. Conclusion

While this house model lost much of its cultural import in the 1920s as new terms like the “minimum dwelling” (*Existenzminimum*) gained momentum in modernist circles and sidelined traditionalist positions, it continued to serve as an aspirational object for the nation’s lower middle-classes and remained the dominant house type in Germany well into the 1960s (Lorbek, 2018). By examining the emergence of the *Kleinhaus* in professional and popular discourse, this article has sought to demonstrate that, in Germany at least, efforts to clarify housing terminology around singular ideals were closely tied to the process of nation-building. In its ability to mobilize national historical myths about civic responsibility and local belonging, the *Kleinhaus* remained a central part of early 20th-century efforts to address Germany’s hous-

ing shortage (Muthesius, 1918; Wolf, 1919). Its historical rediscovery, codification, and fabrication involved energetic cross-disciplinary dialogue between the fields of art history, architecture, and planning. It was a dialogue that reflected, foremost, cultural anxieties over carving a place for the local out of an increasingly homogenous template of European modernity.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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article

The limits of localism: a decade of disaster on homelessness in England

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The rhetoric and practice of localism has attracted significant support within both political and academic circles in the UK in recent years. However, it is the contention of this article that there are, or should be, limits to localism as applied to the basic citizenship rights of vulnerable people. Drawing on a ten-year, mixed-methods study, we use the example of sharply rising homelessness in England to illustrate our argument that localist policymaking has an intrinsic tendency to disadvantage socially marginalised groups. While we acknowledge the central role played by austerity in driving up homelessness over the past decade, we advance the case that the post-2010 localist agenda of successive UK governments has also had an independent and malign effect. At the very least, we seek to demonstrate that localism cannot be viewed as a taken-for-granted progressive model, with centralism (that is, the consistent implementation of a policy across a whole country) also perfectly defensible on progressive grounds in relevant circumstances.

Key words homelessness • localism • housing • welfare reform • austerity • devolution • central–local relations • centralisation

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Introduction

The rhetoric and practice of ‘localism’ has attracted significant support from both the political Left and Right in the UK in recent years, with policymaking power considered excessively centralised in England, in particular, as compared with other

Western European countries (Hildreth, 2011). At its simplest, localism has been described as a ‘positive disposition to the decentralization of political power’ (Clarke and Cochrane, 2013: 10), with such decentralisation thought to offer a wide range of public policy benefits, including ‘diversity and experimentation ... learning and competition ... bring[ing] policymakers closer to people so they are more informed and accountable ... get[ting] central government out of the details of local policy ... engag[ing] people in decisions affecting their lives’ (Costa-Font and Greer, 2013: 2). While some analysts have defended centralism (Walker, 2002), the balance of UK academic opinion has tended to be broadly pro-localist (Powell and Boyne, 2001; Davies, 2008). Concerns have thus focused mainly on the ‘genuineness’ of localist initiatives, or their co-option by neoliberal agendas (Deas, 2013), rather than in-principle objections to the devolution of power down to lower tiers of government or local non-state actors (Hildreth, 2011).

However, it is the contention of this article that there are, or should be, limits to localism as applied to the basic citizenship rights of marginalised groups. In the inevitable trade-off between local autonomy and horizontal equity (that is, treating individuals with similar levels of need living in different places in the same way), some authors seem sympathetic to the argument that ‘some degree of inequality may be a price worth paying for local democracy’ (Powell and Boyne, 2001: 186). However, we argue that the avoidance of harm and the demands of justice should take precedence over local political responsiveness when it comes to meeting the fundamental human needs of vulnerable people (Watts and Fitzpatrick, 2018).

Moreover, we would further venture that there is something *intrinsic* about localism – that is, to policy and priority setting at smaller territorial areas – that will *tend* to be antithetical to the interests of the most socially marginalised groups. Of course, we accept that local and regional authorities may sometimes pursue a generally more progressive policy line than central government. One only has to review the history of UK ‘municipal socialism’ (Davies, 2008), or welfare expansion by Spanish regional governments (Costa-Font and Greer, 2013), to observe such instances. However, a generally egalitarian political outlook should not be confused with a progressive stance towards socially marginalised groups, such as homeless people, ex-offenders, those with substance misuse problems and others apt to be viewed as ‘undeserving’ by local communities. Indeed, international comparative evidence has found that barriers to assistance for such groups can be heightened in egalitarian political communities where a particular premium may be placed on social cohesion, behavioural conformity and personal responsibility (Fitzpatrick and Stephens, 2014).

In this article, we use the example of sharply rising homelessness in England over the past decade to illustrate and explicate our contention that localism has a necessary tendency to disadvantage socially marginalised groups. It should be noted that that we use the term ‘necessary tendency’ here in the critical realist sense of signalling an underlying causal mechanism that may or may not be activated, depending on contingent political and other conditions (Sayer, 2000), but is nonetheless ‘real’ and should be recognised in developing policy and political strategies to protect vulnerable groups.

At the very least, we seek to demonstrate that localism cannot be viewed as a taken-for-granted progressive model, and must be critically assessed for its actual (as opposed to hypothesised or hoped for) outcomes, with centralism also perfectly defensible on progressive grounds in relevant circumstances. By focusing on homeless people

as an extreme case of a marginalised group, we hope to bring into sharp relief the naivety, or cynicism, that lies at the heart of the localist policy agenda, as articulated by [Jacobs and Manzi \(2013: 40–1\)](#):

[Localism] is premised on depoliticized notions of community, neighbourhood and engagement that overlook the degree to which these neighbourhoods are sites of conflicts.... Consensus is rarely achieved, particularly [on] decisions ... about the availability of scarce resources.... Crucially this requires government safeguards that protect against abuse and protection for vulnerable groups to ensure social justice and democratic citizenship.

The article proceeds as follows. After detailing our research methods, we summarise recent homelessness trends and post-2010 central government policy responses. Next, we explore the concept and practical implementation of localism in England, before exploring its homelessness implications and consequences. The key counterargument is then considered: that austerity, not localism, has driven rising homelessness. We conclude by seeking to defend a centralised response to homelessness, or at least a response that is steered from central government in certain key respects.

Methods

The article draws on an ongoing ten-year, multi-method study of the homelessness impacts of economic and policy change in England (2011–21).¹ Since 2011, we have annually reviewed policy, legal and research developments on homelessness, housing and social security. We have also undertaken face-to-face and telephone interviews with senior stakeholders from the statutory, voluntary and independent sectors (averaging 15 interviews annually). These key informants are selected to have complimentary specialist knowledge in the fields of youth, single, family and statutory homelessness, as well as offering a balance in terms of sectoral perspective and geographical location. All interviews are audio-recorded, with informed consent, and fully transcribed before being thematically analysed. While we interview largely the same core group of key informants each year in order to track their (well-informed) views of policy and economic impacts as they unfold over time, we also select a specific theme each year to subject to a particularly 'deep dive'. Particularly pertinent to the present article is that in 2016/17 ([Fitzpatrick et al, 2017](#)), localism was selected as that year's theme, with both the selection of key informants and interview topic guide tailored accordingly.

Another core element of the study is an analysis of official rough-sleeping estimates, together with statistics on 'statutory' homelessness (see later), as well as a range of household surveys containing data relevant to homelessness. To tap into front-line practitioner perspectives, we also undertake an annual online survey of England's 326 local authorities, targeting homelessness service managers, and achieving response rates of 43–57 per cent. This level of participation has tended to increase over time and represents a creditable level of engagement for an entirely voluntary survey. In each of the five years in which the survey has run, respondents have included a wide spread of local authorities in terms of regional location, size, political complexion and homelessness rates. Moreover, since there is a significant turnover each year in which specific councils respond to the survey, we have captured the perspective of a very large proportion of all English local authorities over the course of the study. This has enabled

us to delve beneath the official statistics to enhance understanding of how housing market change, welfare reforms and other key policy developments have impacted on homelessness trends and responses at the local level. The survey comprises both closed and open-ended questions, generating rich qualitative as well as quantitative data.

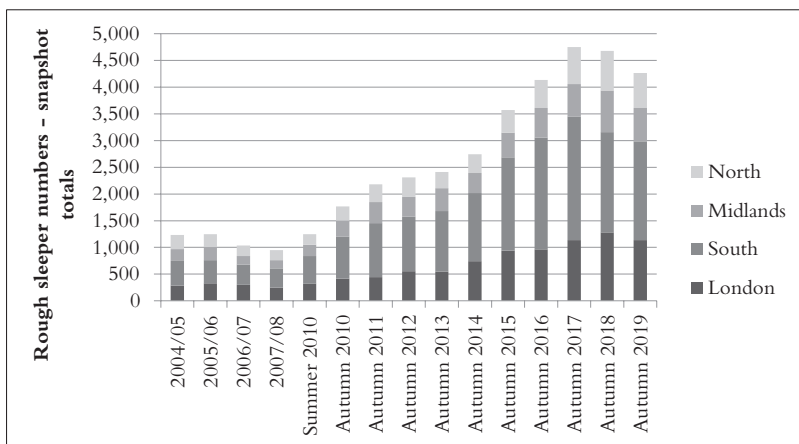
This article thus benefits from a methodology that has been devised to offer a comprehensive and longitudinal view of homelessness developments, enabling their situation in a wider policy and structural context. The research gained ethical approval from Heriot-Watt University Ethics Committee before the commencement of fieldwork in 2011, and this has been kept under review ever since, with specific attention given to the ongoing ethical challenges inherent in maintaining the anonymity of a relatively small number of high-profile senior stakeholders who would be potentially recognisable within the field were it not for the efforts that we make to disguise their identity in all published outputs.

Consistent with UK traditions (Fitzpatrick et al, 2009), the research adopts a broad definition of homelessness. Thus, we cover not only people sleeping rough, but also residents of hostels, refuges, bed-and-breakfast (B&B) hotels and other temporary accommodation, as well as households that English local authorities are legally obliged to rehouse as 'statutorily homeless', that is, assessed as homeless and in 'priority need' (mainly families with children and vulnerable adults). This statutory homelessness system has been a core part of the national English (indeed, wider British) welfare state since 1977, and we return to discuss it further later (Fitzpatrick and Pawson, 2016).

The problem: rising homelessness

Elected in 2010 on a platform of public spending austerity, the Conservative–Liberal Democrat UK Coalition government immediately embarked on a radical welfare and housing reform programme, with a particular focus on cuts to housing allowances for private tenants (Fitzpatrick et al, 2011). All enumerated forms of homelessness subsequently escalated in England, including rough sleeping, which has more than doubled since 2010 according to official numbers (see Figure 1). While these

Figure 1: Trends in local authority rough-sleeper estimates by broad region, 2004–19



Source: 2004/05–2007/08 – collated from Audit Commission Best Value Performance Indicators returns; Summer 2010 onwards – MHCLG.

Figure 2: Statutory homelessness assessment decisions, 2008/09–17/18



Source: Fitzpatrick et al (2019). Source material from MHCLG published statistics.

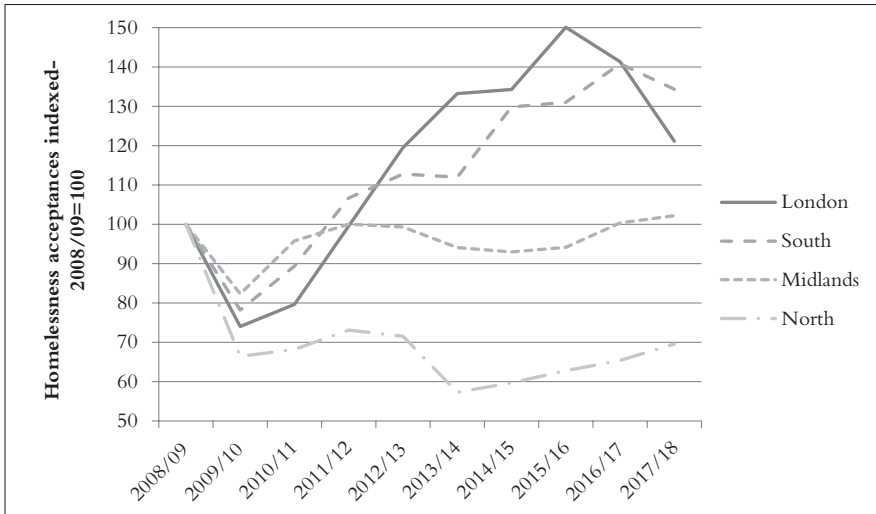
rough-sleeping statistics have some well-documented methodological weaknesses (UK Statistics Authority, 2015), the direction of travel has been clear, albeit that this trend began to reverse from 2018.

At the same time, there has also been an upward trajectory in statutory homelessness numbers in England since 2010 (see Figure 2), concentrated in London and the South (see Figure 3), almost all of which can be attributed to an extraordinary increase in private tenancy terminations (see Figure 4). Even as the rising tide of statutory homelessness acceptances may have recently lost some momentum, temporary accommodation placements have continued to grow (see Figure 5) as local authorities have faced an intensifying shortage of suitable and affordable rehousing opportunities for families entitled to rehousing (Stephens et al, 2019).

Growing homelessness in England is, we would argue, the result of deliberate policy choices rather than the post-2008 recession: previous recessions have not necessarily witnessed a rise in homelessness (Fitzpatrick et al, 2011). What has been particularly ‘toxic’ in recent years has been the combination of an increasingly pressurised housing market in London and the South of England, and the intensification of welfare benefit restrictions. In our annual survey of English local authorities in 2015, 93 per cent of London boroughs, as compared with 49 per cent of Northern local authorities, reported that post-2010 benefit cuts had increased homelessness in their area (Fitzpatrick et al, 2016). This analysis is consistent with quantitative modelling evidence that:

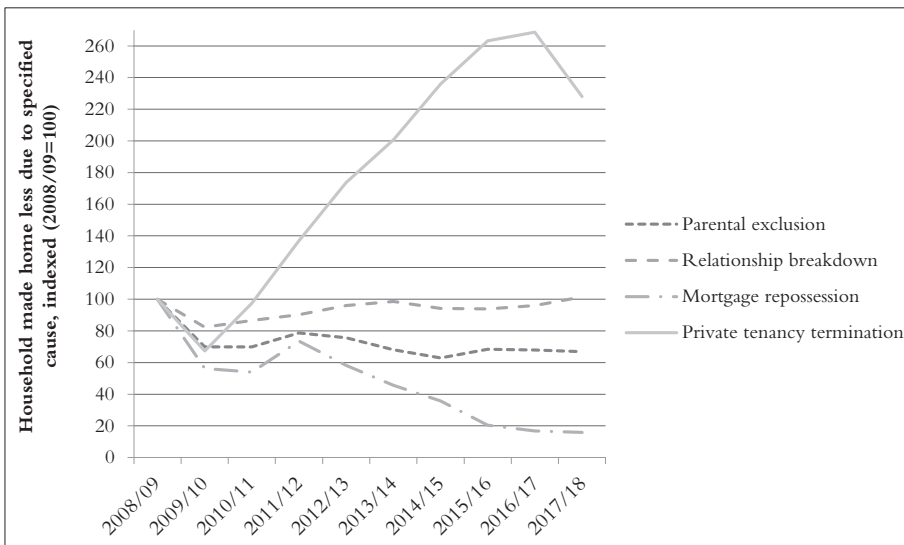
The most important driver of homelessness in all its forms is poverty.... Other drivers include availability and affordability of accommodation, the extent to which prevention measures are used, and the demographics of people experiencing homelessness.... [C]essation of welfare cuts and focused prevention activity can make an impact on ... homelessness but this is limited if not accompanied by investment in affordable and accessible housing supply. (Bramley, 2017: 1)

Figure 3: Homelessness acceptances, 2008/09–17/18: trends at broad region level – indexed



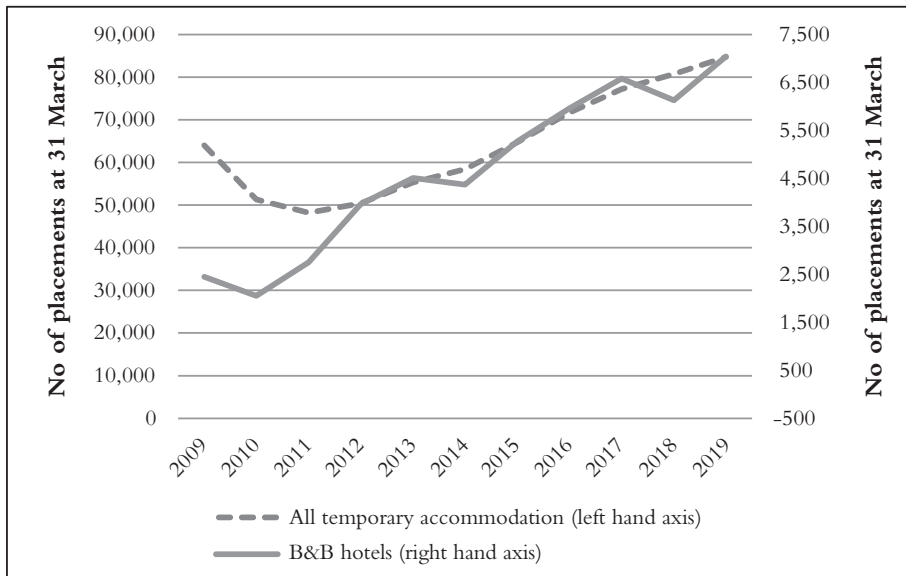
Source: Fitzpatrick et al (2019). Source material from MHCLG published statistics.

Figure 4: Change in number of households made homeless due to selected immediate causes, 2008/09–17/18 – indexed



Source: Fitzpatrick et al (2019). Source material from MHCLG published statistics.

Figure 5: Local authorities' use of temporary accommodation for homeless households



Source: Fitzpatrick et al (2019). Source material from MHCLG published statistics.

Highly relevant here, then is a continuing decline in the availability of social housing, with the net annual flow of vacancies having halved over the past 20 years (Stephens et al, 2019). Bramley’s (2017) conclusions are also consistent with a National Audit Office (2017: 7) assessment that ‘Changes to Local Housing Allowance are likely to have contributed to the affordability of tenancies for those on benefits, and are an element of the increase in homelessness.’ Moreover, the head of the National Audit Office commented that:

‘Homelessness in all its forms has significantly increased in recent years.... Despite this, government has not evaluated the impact of its reforms on this issue, and there remain gaps in its approach. It is difficult to understand why the Department persisted with its light touch approach in the face of such a visibly growing problem.’

Subsequently, the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts described homelessness in England as a ‘national crisis’ and chided the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for its ‘unacceptably complacent’ stance on the problem (House of Commons, 2017).

It is this article’s contention that this apparent ‘complacency’ arises directly from the political commitment of post-2010 UK governments to localism. Moreover, we argue that alongside the austerity-driven social security cuts and housing market pressures just discussed, the policy and ideology of localism has played an independent and malign role in shaping England’s recent homelessness trajectory. Next, we reflect on the theory and practice of localism in this context, before moving on to consider its associated homelessness impacts.

Localism: the solution?

For too long, central government has hoarded and concentrated power. Trying to improve people's lives by imposing decisions, setting targets and demanding inspections from Whitehall simply doesn't work.... It leaves no room for adaptation to reflect local circumstances or innovation to deliver services more effectively and at lower cost. And it leaves people feeling 'done to' and imposed upon – the very opposite of the sense of participation and involvement on which a healthy democracy thrives.... This is the essence of the Big Society.... We are breaking down the barriers that stop councils, local charities, social enterprises and voluntary groups getting things done for themselves. (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2011)

The localism agenda of the 2010 Conservative–Liberal Democrat Coalition government was anchored in a decentralisation ideology shared by both parties (Deas, 2013). With deep roots in communitarian social and political thought (Etzioni, 1998), which had inspired a limited 'new localist' policy direction at the end of the Labour government under Gordon Brown (Turner, 2019), David Cameron's 'Big Society' programme was portrayed as a decisive rejection of old-fashioned, statist styles of governance (Jacobs and Manzi, 2013) in favour of Burkean 'little platoons' undertaking collective forms of (voluntary) social action (Clarke and Cochrane, 2013). While there were continuities with New Labour's 'conditional localism' (Hildreth, 2011), a key distinction was the Coalition government's enthusiasm for 'actively dismantling (rather than reforming) parts of the state' (Deas, 2013: 73).

Thus, key to these linked Conservative and Liberal agendas was the retreat of central government, giving other stakeholders – local authorities but also voluntary and community groups, and faith-based organisations – space to play a bigger role in public welfare (Deas, 2013). The highest-profile example has been food banks, the use of which has grown exponentially in recent years (Sosenko et al, 2019), with David Cameron describing food-bank volunteers as 'part of what I call the Big Society' (Mulholland, 2012). Here, Conservative agendas focused on bolstering personal and civic responsibility (McKee, 2015), dovetailed neatly with traditional Liberal Democrat concerns with 'community politics' (Hildreth, 2011) and devolved forms of governance (Dorey and Garnett, 2016). As one vocal supporter of localism commented:

'Eric Pickles [the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government under the Coalition government] ... announced his arrival in the Department by claiming he had three priorities for his tenure: localism, localism and localism. Liberal Democrat ministers quipped that they would add a fourth priority: localism.' (Cox, 2010: 1)

Taking as axiomatic that "England [is] one of the most centralized Western democracies" (Manzi, 2015), a 2011 parliamentary report opined that: 'The principle of localism is not controversial; it commands cross-party support.... The Government's approach in practice, however, has thus far been marked by inconsistency and incoherence, not helped by a definition of localism that is extremely elastic' (House of Commons, 2011: 3).

Tellingly, though, even at this early stage, warnings on this agenda were sounded by advocacy organisations, as the parliamentary committee conceded:

There is not universal support for the idea that central government should retreat entirely from local affairs, allowing accountability to local people to replace performance monitoring from the centre. In particular, organisations representing vulnerable, marginalised or minority groups argue that these sections of the community need protection that cannot be provided by the current mechanisms of local democratic accountability.... National minimum service standards, in some form, may be necessary. ([House of Commons, 2011: 4](#))

The Localism Act 2011 gave legal form to the Coalition's core localist ethos – that central government should largely absent itself from direct involvement in issues such as homelessness – and, at the same time, incorporated substantive elements highly relevant to homelessness service delivery. This included new powers for social landlords to grant fixed-term tenancies, rather than traditional open-ended tenancies, and enabled local authorities to restrict access to their housing waiting lists through locally defined eligibility rules, for example, excluding aspiring applicants on the grounds of age, residency, work-search activity or a 'poor tenancy record'. Crucially, councils could also now elect to discharge their statutory rehousing duty to homeless households via the offer of a fixed-term private, rather than social, tenancy. Another key homelessness-relevant measure incorporated within this localism agenda – albeit introduced in the final phase of the predecessor Labour government – was the 2009 removal of the ring fence for 'Supporting People' funding. This underpins local authority provision of housing-related support that helps homeless people and other vulnerable groups sustain their accommodation. Since then, authorities have been free to divert this money to other priorities ([Turner, 2019](#)). The Housing and Planning Act 2016, subsequently passed under the Cameron-led Conservative government, sought to impose on local authorities fixed-term tenancies and other measures originally promoted as local 'flexibilities'; however, the May-led Conservative administration backed off from this coercive stance in the radically changed political climate after the Grenfell Tower fire disaster ([Stephens et al, 2019](#)).

Over the past decade, the localisation of key policy and practice frameworks has been evident not only in the housing and homelessness arena, but also in welfare benefits, particularly at the emergency end of the spectrum ([Social Security Advisory Committee, 2015](#)). Three crucial measures stand out here. The first has been the greatly expanded budget for Discretionary Housing Payments, affording local authorities substantial funds for autonomously determined welfare expenditure to (very partially) mitigate mainstream housing allowance cuts. Discretionary housing payment allocations to councils were ramped up from £30 million in 2011/12 to £165 million in 2014/15, which is a measure interpreted by [Turner \(2019: 60\)](#); see also [Meers, 2019](#)) as enabling ministers to 'shift some responsibility for the effects of its decisions to local authorities'.

Second, the discretionary Social Fund – cash payments to very low-income households in crisis situations – was abolished in 2013 and replaced by a power (but not a duty) for local authorities to establish their own local welfare assistance schemes. Initially, funding for these local schemes was identified, though not ring-fenced,

within the central government revenue support grant to local authorities. In 2017/18, this budget line disappeared altogether in the local government funding settlement (Gibbons, 2017).

Third, also in 2013, the national Council Tax Benefit scheme was replaced by locally determined ‘council tax reduction schemes’, along with a 10 per cent overall budget cut. Associated protections stipulated for pensioner households meant that this effectively amounted to a 20 per cent cut in funds available for ‘unprotected’ working-age claimants.

It is important to acknowledge that key elements of the national welfare framework remained in place even after these changes were implemented, including a (weakened) national system of income maintenance benefits and an (altered) statutory homelessness system. Some counter-localisation trends were also evident, most notably, local authorities lost their role in the administration of housing allowances with the roll-out of the new, simplified, working-age benefit ‘Universal Credit’. However, the combined impact of the housing and welfare changes outlined earlier was, we would argue, to significantly elevate the role played by English councils and other local actors in determining the scale, nature and generosity of the emergency help available to impoverished and vulnerable groups. We now turn to look at the interrelationship between this encroaching localism and increasing homelessness across England.

The homelessness impacts of localism

National-level key informants interviewed in our study over the past decade have been consistently critical of localism’s impacts on homelessness. Their core concern has been the central government’s post-2010 vacation of this policy space, which some have characterised as a ‘dereliction of duty’ (Maclennan and O’Sullivan, 2013):

‘Eric Pickles ... was very clear that everything was about localism and it wasn’t the role of government to support, interfere or have anything to do with how local authorities delivered on the ground.... That mantra of localism ... has its place ... but the way it was taken and interpreted by [the government] has been a disaster for homelessness. It means that the structural changes that needed to be put in place to manage and go forward ... didn’t happen.’ (Independent key informant, 2017)

While acknowledging that a range of targeted homelessness initiatives have been supported by successive austerity-era Westminster governments, informants generally perceived an absence of strategic direction or leverage over homelessness practice. As also noted by the [National Audit Office \(2017\)](#), this contrasts with earlier phases of rising homelessness – for example, the late 1980s and late 1990s – when Westminster took a highly assertive and often successful (if sometimes controversial) stance on homelessness:

‘I use the example of under the Blair government and the Social Exclusion Unit appointing Louise Casey as the [homelessness] “tsar”. Whether you agree with it or not ... it gets [things] done ... and we cut rough sleeping by two thirds because somebody [was] allowed – given permission and given authority and power – to do it.’ (Statutory sector key informant, 2017)

‘when we’ve tackled homelessness in the past, we’ve done it in collaboration between central, local and voluntary sector providers, and we’ve done it with a strong sense of target and a strong sense of direction. The government, over the last few years, have not had a sense of direction, and a lot of the money that they’ve thrown towards it has been singular funded streams but with no sense of coherence across the top of them.... What we know from our work around the country is that local areas do look to government for leadership on this stuff.’ (Voluntary sector key informant, 2017)

Echoing the parliamentary evidence referenced earlier, we encountered a particularly intense critique of post-2010 localism from single homelessness service providers, who, from the very start, feared that the withdrawal of central government from this policy arena would seriously disadvantage their clients:

‘You need a national framework and to work flexibly within it locally. If councils are not told by government what to do ... the Not in My Back Garden idea ... I worry about giving everything to local councillors.’ (Voluntary sector key informant, 2012)

Alongside this overarching concern about the lack of centralised policy direction on homelessness, specific measures implemented under the localist rubric also raised concerns among voluntary sector key informants and sometimes also local authority homelessness officers.

Foremost among these were the new powers that local authorities gained under the Localism Act 2011 to restrict eligibility to the social housing waiting list. While statutorily homeless households should, by law, have subsequently continued to receive reasonable preference in council housing allocations, there is evidence from case law that some councils started to use their new powers to unlawfully exclude them from their housing lists.² Key informant testimony indicated that such restrictions were sometimes even applied to women and children fleeing domestic violence:

‘in some areas, you have to have lived there for five years before you are eligible for a local authority property.... We’ve tried to argue ... that women experiencing domestic violence shouldn’t have had to live in that borough for that amount of time.’ (Voluntary sector key informant, 2014)

Some local authority survey respondents confirmed the existence of these unlawful practices:

‘We have a five-year residency rule which means 50 per cent of homeless families cannot apply for social housing.’ (Local authority respondent, the South, 2016)

Voluntary sector concern that local authorities’ ability to meet their legal duties by rehousing people in the private rather than social rented sector would deter applications for assistance seemed confirmed by some of what local authorities had to say (see also [Turner, 2019](#)):

‘What ... had a big impact on our statutory homeless numbers is that we adopted the Localism Act power to discharge duty with a single private rented offer. And just the threat of that in our Housing Options discussions with customers at an initial stage has been sufficient to divert even more families away from the statutory route.’ (Local authority respondent, London, 2014)

A few local authorities saw the fixed-term social tenancies enabled under the 2011 Act as having positive homelessness impacts: “The introduction of fixed-term tenancies may result in more properties being available to homeless households if fixed-term tenancies are not extended” (local authority respondent, the South, 2016). However, the balance of local authority opinion was that their effects would be negative: “It is unclear what will happen to tenants on time-limited tenancies.... Some may face repeat homelessness at the end of the period” (local authority respondent, the South, 2016); “The ending of secure social tenancies is likely to see an increase in homelessness in the future” (local authority respondent, the North, 2016). Some local authorities emphasised what was seen as the beneficially increased scope for the local coordination of welfare funds:

‘Having locally determined forms of welfare such as Discretionary Housing Payments, local welfare assistance funds, has helped us to target these funds to preventing and relieving homelessness. Bringing together this type of support, budgeting, employment and homelessness support, has enabled us to stabilise households’ position more effectively.’ (Local authority respondent, London, 2016)

However, the growing reliance on these discretionary, budget-limited schemes was more often viewed negatively by local authority homelessness managers, as well as by national key informants: “More groups of people now reliant on Discretionary Housing Payments due to [welfare] cuts. There is no funding for local welfare assistance funds. Council Tax Support scheme changed eligibility which reduced ... access” (local authority respondent, the South, 2016). It should be noted here that without a statutory duty to provide a local welfare assistance fund, many cash-strapped English local authorities have now closed or severely reduced their emergency welfare schemes (Gibbons, 2017). As revealed by our 2018 survey, in almost one fifth (18 per cent) of all English councils, these funds had entirely disappeared: “[Name of county council] decided to abandon this scheme. Seven local authorities are affected by this decision. There has been no replacement” (local authority respondent, the South, 2018). The direction of travel has been similar, if not quite as catastrophic, with Council Tax Benefit schemes (Turner, 2019).

However, most serious of all for homeless people has probably been the loss of the ring-fenced Supporting People funds:

‘I think there are some positive aspects to localism affording communities greater involvement in decision-making but equally there are negatives, such as allowing councils to make decisions locally, especially where ring-fenced money has been concerned as this is no longer spent as intended in our area, such as the Supporting People grant.’ (Local authority respondent, the Midlands, 2016)

Such concerns were rejected by the then Secretary of State, Eric Pickles, in evidence to the 2011 Select Committee inquiry:

I am aware of some places in the country that are taking significant cuts in Supporting People – I completely deprecate that. But most local authorities are protecting the scheme, not just to help vulnerable people but because it also makes enormous economic sense. One of the consequences of localism is that you have to allow local communities to make decisions about where that spending goes. Most sensible local authorities will come to the conclusion that £1 spent on Supporting People will probably save them £5 or £6 further down the line.... It would be a brave local authority that cut Supporting People. (House of Commons, 2011: 27)

In reality, between 2010/11 and 2018/19, English local authorities reduced Supporting People expenditure by 78 per cent in real terms.³ The minister's 2011 comments are thus revealed as naive at best. The devastating impact of the loss of Supporting People funding for, in particular, single homelessness services has been widely reported on, not least in successive annual reports by the umbrella organisation [Homeless Link \(2015b\)](#) and a highly critical report by the [National Audit Office \(2017\)](#).

Is the problem localism or austerity?

Many policy analysts might argue at this point that, surely, the homelessness-related concerns articulated earlier, especially the cuts in various forms of funding, should be attributed to overall public spending contraction, not to localism specifically. Councils have certainly borne the brunt of austerity-related funding cuts, with the most deprived local authorities tending to be the hardest hit ([Hastings et al, 2017](#)). An estimated £5 billion less was spent by local authorities on homelessness-related activities between 2008/09 and 2017/18 than would have been the case had funding continued at 2008/09 levels ([Thunder and Rose, 2019](#)), and this at a time when homelessness numbers rose sharply.

We would therefore readily acknowledge the devastating impacts of austerity on the support available to people at risk of homelessness since 2010. It is also clear that localism is sometimes used as a tool to help deliver on austerity, with the 'cutting and devolving' of budgets formerly the responsibility of central government, sometimes as an antecedent to eliminating them altogether, being a well-evidenced political stratagem to mute opposition and/or deflect blame ([Costa-Font and Greer, 2013](#); [Meers, 2019](#); [Turner, 2019](#)). A clear post-2010 example of such 'policy dumping' ([MacLennan and O'Sullivan, 2013](#)) has been the lamentable fate of the discretionary Social Fund in England, as noted earlier.

We nevertheless contend that there are effects that are *intrinsic* to the logic of localism that will tend to have deleterious impacts on homeless people and other marginalised groups even outside of a period of austerity, albeit that these effects are often amplified by simultaneous public expenditure cuts. First, localism inappropriately and unfairly places primary responsibility for tackling structurally driven social problems on local actors who have no direct leverage over the relevant welfare policies and public expenditure decisions. This is one example of what [Clarke and Cochrane \(2013: 14\)](#) term the 'non-autonomous' nature of local needs, which very

often result from ‘decisions made far beyond local borders’. Of course, this observation is consistent with the idea that some local authorities may be more able or motivated than others to mitigate the impacts of these damaging national decisions (Watts et al, 2019). Moreover, while the prevalence of a localist agenda does not *prevent* central government from addressing the structural causes of homelessness, it may well help facilitate the avoidance of doing so by providing convenient ‘cover’ for either deleterious actions (such as ‘stealthy’ welfare cuts) or simply inaction: “Localism was merely the government’s way of absolving itself of any responsibility for housing and homelessness” (local authority respondent, the South, 2016).

Second, by definition, the localisation of the homelessness policymaking function brings about a diffusion of expertise across a very large number of, often very small, local authorities, who may lack any specialist capacity in this field. This extreme fragmentation of policymaking functions also poses significant challenges for those seeking to influence policy and practice in progressive directions for marginalised groups. While innovations may often emerge in a bottom-up fashion – as with ‘Housing Options’ approaches to homelessness prevention, for example (Pawson, 2007) – the scaling up of such approaches ultimately relies on central government stewardship. It is no coincidence that major steps forward on homelessness have almost always required the deployment of the legal, financial and regulatory levers that the government uniquely has at its disposal. Key examples from England include the two thirds reduction in rough sleeping between 1999 and 2002, and the 50 per cent reduction in temporary accommodation placements between 2003 and 2010 (Fitzpatrick et al, 2011). So too in other countries: the much-lauded ‘Housing First’-based Finnish drive to end homelessness (Pleace et al, 2015) and the abolition of the priority need criterion in Scotland, such that virtually all homeless people are now entitled to settled rehousing, both emerged from national programmes driven by state-led ‘progressive elites’ (Fitzpatrick and Pawson, 2016). In contrast, relying on hundreds of local authorities to identify and adopt well-evidenced new ideas means that advances will almost certainly be patchy and slow – with a significant and inefficient ‘drag’ on progress exerted by laggards. Of course, in the English case, this is to some extent deliberate, with localism motivated, in part, by ‘a rejection of the rational, evidence-based approach ... central to the politics of the previous Labour administration’ (Deas, 2013: 67).

Third, increasingly localised housing and welfare responses, especially – but not only – in times of budget stringency, will often make it more difficult for those without a ‘local connection’ to access the help they need. The [Social Security Advisory Committee \(2015\)](#), for example, reported that councils in the post-2011 period were increasingly requiring commissioned service providers, including Women’s Aid, to ‘gatekeep’ on their behalf by obliging them to exclude those without a local connection. [Turner \(2019\)](#) reports that many local authorities utilised 2011 Act powers to exclude those lacking a local connection from their housing waiting lists, including, as we saw earlier, some statutorily homeless households. This was confirmed by local authorities in our annual survey: “More control over Housing Register has been good and enabled us to prioritise local people” (local authority, the South, 2016). Similarly, the House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee (House of Commons, 2016) has expressed concern about the application of ‘local connection’ requirements to access local welfare assistance schemes. The direction of travel is thus very clear and perfectly logical: the more localised the welfare and housing safety net

is, the more likely it is that vulnerable groups who are mobile between local authority areas (for example, women fleeing violence) will be excluded from assistance as local authorities face both fiscal and political incentives to restrict local services to 'local people' (Turner, 2019).

Fourth, 'unpopular' groups such as homeless people, especially those with complex support needs, are vulnerable to marginalisation in decentralised systems, which can leave politically invisible or geographically dispersed groups 'at the mercy of the vagaries of local politics and funding choices made under the pressure of cuts' (House of Commons, 2011: 28). Turner (2019: 14) has adroitly noted that 'in such circumstances (high potential savings, low political costs), localization is highly likely to lead to reductions in the entitlements of small and relatively vulnerable groups within local populations'. One supported housing provider made this plain to the parliamentary inquiry on localism in 2011:

Services like ours, which are mainly about providing support and accommodation for chronic alcoholics and drug addicts, are seen by many as helping people who do not deserve help.... [A]t election time, the candidate who announced that his policy was to close hostels for alcoholics and drug addicts, to get rid of inmates and cut the council tax, might stand a good chance of dislodging a responsible councillor from his seat in a marginal ward. (House of Commons, 2011: 28)

While such concerns are certainly heightened during periods of austerity and budget cuts, there is no reason to suppose that they are limited to these contexts. For one thing, they extend beyond matters of resource allocation and also pertain to local resistance to the presence of, and provision for, 'undeserving' groups (see also Matthews et al, 2015). As one single homelessness service senior manager commented to us: "as a pan-London organisation, we represent a community of identity, not a geographic community, and focus on geographic community will always disadvantage us". He went on to say that "communities are by definition exclusive" and will tend to exclude his clients who "don't fit and obviously don't fit". The umbrella organisation Homeless Link (2015a: 10) has likewise highlighted ways in which localism can unhelpfully open up single homelessness services to community scrutiny, as well as to budget cuts: 'We have learnt from the experience of increased localism that investment can be diverted away from population groups [lacking] statutory protection, and ... also among the least popular locally – such as single people who are homeless or sleeping rough.' The validity of these concerns has, of course, been substantiated in spectacular fashion by the massively disproportionate cuts made to Supporting People expenditure by English local authorities (see also Turner, 2019).

Fifth, and most fundamentally, the weakening of the national floor of entitlement-based protection in favour of locally determined, variable levels of assistance introduces, for us, a morally unsupportable level of horizontal inequity in the meeting of vulnerable citizens' fundamental needs (Doyal and Gough, 1991). As the Social Security Advisory Committee (2015: 47) commented:

shifting the balance away from national policies and national minimum standards brings with it a greater risk not just of unacceptable variation in practice but of inequality in standards and outcomes. While it can be argued

that varying inputs and delivery methods at the local level can reflect different local needs and circumstances, some of our stakeholders maintained that this should not undermine a fundamental commitment to the achievement of similar or equivalent outcomes based on common citizenship.

While it is, of course, vital that national programmes are tailored to (objectively varying) local conditions, it is simply not safe to assume that local ‘folk ... know what’s best’ (Eric Pickles, quoted in Clarke and Cochrane, 2013: 20) for homeless people with complex support needs, and this includes well-intentioned local voluntary and community organisations. Far from necessarily being a progressive force for good, some ‘path-dependent’ voluntary sector actors, many of them faith-based and providing rudimentary and even damaging types of support, can be significant *barriers* to progress in the homelessness field, whose opposition to radical reform has to be overcome with national, evidence-based initiatives (Parsell and Watts, 2017).

Last, but certainly not least, the indignity and disempowerment intrinsic to reliance on (local) discretionary rather than (national) entitlement-based assistance must be recognised (see also Watts and Fitzpatrick, 2018):

‘The insidious nature of [Discretionary Housing Payments] has not been highlighted enough in moving away from a social security system that is governed by universal regulation and based on need. People should be able to rely on a basic level of support whatever the circumstances.... It is demeaning and stressful for recipients to go “cap in hand” to a local official.’ (Local authority respondent, the South, 2015)

Conclusions

This article started from the premise that rising homelessness post-2010 resulted largely from welfare reform and housing market pressures, which are themselves the outcome of deliberate (and avoidable) policy choices by central government. However, we would also insist that the ideology and practice of localism has made a bad situation worse – enabling central government to evade responsibility for the consequences of its actions, and leaving cash-strapped, ill-equipped local authorities, and increasingly civil society actors, to pick up the pieces of what has become a national homelessness crisis. The ‘patchy retrenchment’ (Turner, 2019: 61) that localism has wrought in housing and welfare responses across England has weakened the emergency support available to vulnerable households, consequently contributing to rising homelessness.

While we have focused here on a single case study drawn from a period of austerity, our contention is that the underlying logic of our argument extends its resonance much further. In particular, we would posit that the ‘conservative communitarianism’ (Davies, 2008) intrinsic to localism means that even in times of rising budgets, and in varying political contexts, this model has a necessary tendency (Sayer, 2000) to be highly problematic for relatively small, marginalised and unpopular populations whose interests are imperilled in the cut and thrust of local politics. Admittedly, New Labour’s ‘predilection for centralism’ may well have precipitated the beginning of a localist reaction before the Coalition took office (MacLennan and O’Sullivan, 2013: 608). Nevertheless, at least when it comes to homelessness, the outcomes of New Labour’s centralising tendencies were, on balance, strongly (albeit not uniformly)

positive (Fitzpatrick et al, 2009). This is also in keeping with experiences in other countries, where effective measures on homelessness almost always require a strong steer from central or large-scale federal government (Fitzpatrick et al, 2012). Thus, the alarming rise in homelessness in England, and the deleterious role played by localism therein, can and should be laid at the door of Liberal Democrat ‘community politics’ as much as Conservative anti-state, anti-redistributive and pro-charity ‘Big Society’ ideology.

Particularly in the current anti-elitist climate, it contradicts the populist zeitgeist to say so, but sometimes the ‘woman/man in Whitehall *does* know best’ – as they have the research evidence, policy knowledge, money, leverage, targets and performance framework needed to enable positive change. The extent to which local stakeholders *welcomed* rather than *resented* proactive central government support – and often direction – on homelessness is striking from the quantitative and qualitative data that we have collected over the past decade. *How* this is done is crucial: inflexible diktats from generalist civil servants with no specialist knowledge on homelessness are, of course, likely to be both unwelcome and ineffective. However, hands-on support from specialist homelessness advisors – for example, seconded experts well versed in the pressures that local authorities face, and with the ability to adapt their highly ‘granular’ advice to the complex realities on the ground – is quite a different matter.

Clearly, in this field as in many others, a balance must be struck between flexibility to accommodate varying local conditions, and national minimum standards. It would be disingenuous to maintain that there were no positive outcomes of localism over the past decade. Certainly, some imaginative councils, with progressive political backing, used these flexibilities to align (dwindling) resources as effectively as possible to local conditions (Watts et al, 2019). It may also be that city-regions offer a more suitable (larger) scale for local coordinated efforts to address homelessness (Costa-Font and Greer, 2013).

However, the overall message of this article is that strong central government leadership and accountability is needed to drive positive change on homelessness – or even just to stabilise a deteriorating situation. Successive Coalition and Conservative governments may have hoped that localising homelessness responses would make the crisis ‘less conspicuous’ (Jacobs and Manzi, 2013: 39) but the unmistakably growing numbers on the streets, reinforced by public and media concerns about the deaths of homeless people (Office for National Statistics, 2018), put paid to that. This prompted something of a retreat from localism under the later stages of the May government, which introduced a new national strategy on rough sleeping (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2018), and also supported the passage of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which originated as a Private Member’s Bill. The positive impacts of these central government actions can at least arguably be seen in the recent plateauing of homelessness and rough sleeping captured in Figures 1–4 earlier; however, it will take some considerable time to dial back the damaging effects of almost a decade of localism compounding austerity. Interestingly, the current Conservative Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, has recently appointed Tony Blair’s original ‘homelessness czar’ (Louise Casey) to conduct a review of rough sleeping in England in a move that seems to take us back full circle to the time before the disaster that has been localism in this field.⁴

Geographical variability driven by local political priorities and expediency may be acceptable, even desirable, in some areas of public policy to bolster local democracy (Davies, 2008) and to align local policies with citizens’ preferences (Turner, 2019).

However, we would contend that localism was always an obviously dangerous strategy on issues like homelessness and crisis welfare provision, which concern the fundamental needs of a marginalised population. As a concept, it is all the more dangerous because it is seductive to at least some on the Centre-Left, in the name of democratisation and the decentralisation of power, as well as those on the Right, always keen to find ways to shrink the state and expand the role of civil society, including faith groups, in assisting low-income households in an explicit throwback to the pre-welfare state era (Clarke and Cochrane, 2013). The disastrous consequences of localism for homelessness were predictable, and, indeed, predicted (Fitzpatrick et al, 2011), and should make those considering themselves progressives wary of unqualified support for community-oriented, decentralised policy approaches in this sort of field.

Widening our argument beyond the immediate homelessness case, we would contend that a number of core criteria can be extracted from our analysis for more general deployment in determining the appropriate scale for social policy formulation. In our view, policymakers should ask themselves the following three key questions. First, do the relevant powers and duties impinge on people's ability to meet their most fundamental material needs, such as for food, shelter and warmth? Second, do they impact mainly or disproportionately on especially marginalised, unpopular, geographically dispersed or mobile populations? Third, do they pertain to specialist areas of public policy, where local expertise on evidence-based approaches may well be wanting? If the answer to any or all of these questions is 'yes', then localised approaches are highly likely to be both iniquitous and inefficient, and a centralised approach has much to commend it.

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Notes

¹ For the full report series, see: www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/

² See *R (Jakimaviciute) v Hammersmith & Fulham LBC* [2014] EWCA Civ 1438, [2015] HLR 5, CA.

³ Analysis based on annual Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Financial and General Statistics Estimates, using Consumer Price Index (CPI) as a deflator.

⁴ See: www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/boris-johnson-homelessness-tony-blair-rough-sleeping-louise-casey-a9361996.html

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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Scottish Community Empowerment: Reconfigured Localism or an Opportunity for Change?

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Community development and regeneration policy in Scotland employs aspirational language, depicting communities as the empowered drivers of economic and social change. It anticipates that willing, able and highly skilled community groups will come forward and assume responsibility for the delivery of local services. This narrative fails to account for the impacts of austerity, the complexities of empowerment (Skerratt and Steiner, 2013) or what will happen to communities who fail to be empowered. The article challenges the positive narrative employed in Scotland by highlighting issues that complicate the empowerment process. It concludes by suggesting ways in which a 'Scottish Approach' to policy making may help to create opportunities for empowerment policy in Scotland to better address the challenges, inequalities and complexities of empowerment.

Responsibilisation and Community Governance

In outlining a vision of civic life in Scotland, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act (Scottish Government, 2015) assumes the presence of active, engaged, willing and committed communities. Through the Act, the Scottish Government outlines an approach to governing Scotland 'underpinned by the belief that the people of this country can, and should, take increased responsibility for the issues that affect our nation' (Scottish Government, 2009; p.2). This narrative has subsequently been woven into national strategies on service provision and design, regeneration, social enterprise and the third sector, the government's National Performance Framework and Community Engagement Standards (Scottish Government, 2011a; Scottish Government, 2011b; Scottish Government, 2016). As a result, Scottish community development policy rests upon the principles of responsabilization and empowerment

of communities as a response to austerity and the rolling-back of services (Featherstone et al., 2012; MacLeod and Emejulu, 2014; Peck and Tickell, 2002).

The co-option of communities into this process serves to depoliticize increasing inequality and deprivation brought about by austerity. Existing research indicates that new responsibilities afforded to communities under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) and Localism (England and Wales) Acts (such as asset transfers, right to buy, and participation requests) recruit communities as the developers of local services, whilst governments enable change (Aiken, Taylor and Moran, 2016; Connolly, 2016; Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012; Painter et al., 2011). This co-option of communities into the reform agenda has been described as both ‘neo-liberalism with a community face’ and the creation of communities as sites of governable terrain (Carmel and Harlock, 2008; MacLeod and Emejulu, 2014; p.446). These community governance projects are promoted through the use of language that focuses upon the resilience and capacity of communities to respond to policy incentives (Joseph, 2013; MacLachlan, 2016; Mowbray, 2005; Netto et al., 2012). Indeed, it is frequently the access to pre-existing sources of capacity, skills and resilience inherent within communities, which dictates the success of organisations in accessing funding and support (Craig, 2007; Walton and Macmillan, 2015), whilst groups unable or unwilling to comply with governance criteria have been found to be ineligible for funding and support (Barnes and Prior, 2000). In Scotland, compliance with community governance objectives is made manifest through requirements to link with priorities of regeneration strategies and local action plans to access funding and support.

Noncompliance and inequality

Scotland’s empowerment policy adopts a holistic view of communities and the individuals comprising them. This policy assumes that individuals are willing members of community groups and that individual interests align, however fails to acknowledge the myriad of reasons behind non-participation. It also reconceptualises non-compliance as a form of individual or civic deviance (Kothari, 2001; p.148). The social and personal factors contributing towards decisions to participate (or not) have

been found to range from local politics and pre-established hierarchies, to lack of skills needed to complete practical development work, e.g. form filling, to the uncertain and ‘non-linear’ nature of development work (Skerratt and Steiner, 2013; p.324). Additionally, by failing to acknowledge the individual motivations behind participation, empowerment policy assumes individuals to have high levels of resources, skills and capacity to engage. Unfortunately, owing to the implementation of Scottish empowerment legislation in response to austerity, communities without these characteristics are subsequently penalised when they are unable to replace retreating public service provision (Findlay-King et al., 2017). Existing research has indicated that this ‘neo-liberal offloading’ can lead to insecure community services, the burdening of communities, and deprived communities being disproportionately affected due to levels of social capital being expended (McKendrick et al., 2016; Painter et al., 2011; p.42). Consequently, communities with the time, skills and capacity to engage become privileged, forming a local ‘consultative elite’ and furthering existing inequalities and the under representation of marginalised groups (Shaw, 2017; pg.11). These issues open up questions about the types of groups being privileged through the empowerment process, a process typically found to support pre-existing local power structures (Skerratt and Steiner, 2013). This emphasises how disparity in pre-existing levels of skills and social capital within communities can affect their ability to be empowered (Findlay-King et al., 2017; Mohan and Stokke, 2000).

Broader economic issues also play a key role in defining the success and support needs of community groups involved in empowerment activity. Looking specifically at community empowerment within a Scottish context, Scott (2012) has highlighted that legislation has failed to acknowledge the influence of local economies on project success. Currently, communities are viewed as sites of enterprise, creating a culture of competition whereby communities must make themselves attractive to external investment (Shaw, 2017). However this fails to recognise how community enterprise projects depend upon the strength of local economies to support enterprise activity, and that communities already affected by poverty will struggle to attract outside

investment, in the form of tourism, or local investment from community members paying for services (Scott, 2012; p.85).

The specific case of small community groups

A central marker of success for Scotland's empowerment legislation lies in how well it is able to activate and empower communities to take on new powers. Literature exploring the needs of community groups indicates that the challenges they face are more complex than currently acknowledged in the positive rhetoric surrounding empowerment. Primarily, it is important to acknowledge that empowerment activity is a political act with opportunities for personal, local and regional tensions to arise (Sharma, 2008). In some instances these tensions can worsen existing community relations. Exploring these issues in a Scottish context, Skerratt and Steiner's (2013) work underlines a need to challenge expectations surrounding communities and empowerment activity. They highlight groups choosing not to engage in empowerment programmes and, amongst those who did engage, groups were fragmentary with changeable personal and collective motivations. The authors also emphasised the iterative non-linear nature of development work, which results in a more complex empowerment process (Skerratt and Steiner, 2013). Such work highlights the importance cooperative local networks can have for empowerment activity, and cautions against assumptions of empowerment as a natural outcome.

Small community organisations that take on much of the empowerment activity are also vulnerable and at risk of being overwhelmed by the new responsibilities placed on them. As groups increase their responsibilities, access funding or establish partnerships with professional agencies, they are required to increase professional capacity. This not only creates an administrative burden for small organisations, it endangers the collaborative and peer-led process, which defines community-led work. Conn (2011) describes this process as an intricate balance between the vertical, hierarchical world of corporate organisations and the voluntary, peer-led and horizontal structure of community groups. The defining factor of community organisations, according to Conn, is the way in which 'individuals, when they come together voluntarily through their shared interests, connect to give each other mutual

peer support in some way' (Conn, 2011; p.5). One of the ways in which professional community development practitioners aim to address the imbalance between the existing skills of community organisations and their new responsibilities is through 'capacity building' exercises. However existing research has highlighted that in many instances this support fails to provide what community groups need. Donahue (2011) explores the issues of support for community organisations and indicates that, in many instances, community groups objected to taking part in vague, capacity building exercises instead of accessing training, which addressed their own specific organisational aims. Areas in which support was needed were around governance, volunteer staffing and generating sustainable income beyond revenue funding (Donahue, 2011). This highlights the fragility of organisations across the community sector and the challenges they face as they look to take on responsibilities locally.

Divergence: a Scottish approach to Localism

Despite its neo-liberal underpinnings, Scotland's Empowerment legislation arguably provides some basis for a participatory alternative to the prescriptive market liberalism of the Localism Act in England and Wales. The consultative nature of policy design and implementation within Scotland may allow more opportunities for addressing the challenges and complexities of empowerment activity. In defining how Scottish policy-making differs to that of Westminster, Cairney, Russel and St Denney (2016) suggest that Scotland benefits from adopting a more consultative and cooperative style of policy making. This approach sees the government work in partnership with stakeholders to support policy objectives. The authors suggest that a positive rhetoric has come to be associated with Scotland's policy making process, based upon this collaborative, joined-up approach. This, they suggest, risks overlooking the complex and unavoidable external 'universal' issues which affect Scottish policymaking. These include a lack of control over reserved powers, the inevitability of 'bounded rationality' affecting the decision-making process via limited information or time constraints, and the tensions associated with managing austerity and localism (Cairney, Russell and St Denny, 2016; Cairney and St Denny, 2015; Pugh and Connolly, 2016). The authors highlight territorial advantages of making policy in Scotland. Firstly, the smaller scale of Scottish politics generates an

environment in which policy makers work in close proximity to local authority, statutory and voluntary sector partners. As a result, relations are possible which allow policy makers to overcome organisational silos prevalent in the policy making process of larger polities. Secondly, increased contact with stakeholders may help overcome policy ambiguity surrounding key terminology and ensure activity to support policy is effectively administered. Finally, owing to its size and enhanced network of cross-sector partnerships, greater discretion over policy outcomes is possible (Cairney, Russell and St Denny, 2016).

However, in acknowledging any value that a Scottish approach could bring to the implementation and monitoring of empowerment policy requires acknowledging the broader underlying ‘universal’ issues of austerity and neoliberal reform driving UK policy. Whilst austerity and neo-liberalism have been acknowledged as drivers behind the Localism Act, Scotland’s empowerment legislation risks offering a distractingly positive veneer on what may turn out to be neo-liberalism ‘by the back door’. The implementation of Scotland’s neo-liberal agenda may also prove more efficient than its counterpart in Westminster, owing to the embedded nature of empowerment legislation within the National Performance Framework, local action plans and regional strategies. Acknowledging these aspects creates a critical rationale to suggest constructive ways in which policy solutions can move beyond the simplistic and overly positive narrative of ‘empowerment’ towards addressing the complex and challenging reality of community development.

Such solutions may be able to take advantage of the territorial factors, specific to Scotland, outlined by Cairney et al (2016). As the authors note, Scotland’s policy making community is relatively small in size, with significant overlap and partnership working between sectors and agencies. Whilst this level of networked governance can be difficult to manage, significant opportunities are also created for bottom-up feedback and empowerment of community groups. In ensuring on-going consultation and discussion with community groups and local partners, there are opportunities for the complexities and difficulties facing local groups to surface. Through increased feedback, policy ambiguity may also be resolved. The significant role played by the

voluntary sector in the delivery of services and administration of funding also provides opportunities to overcome the challenges of tailoring support to meet community need. By providing meaningful, and potentially challenging, feedback about what is, and importantly isn't, working in community 'capacity building', the voluntary sector has opportunities to better represent the experiences of local community groups. Wide distribution and use of reports detailing the challenges facing groups engaged in empowerment activity will be useful; a recent review of Big Lottery funding provides a good example of how policy discussions can better account for the complex and uneven nature of empowerment (Scottish Community Development Centre and Community Enterprise, 2017). Finally, further development requires that community empowerment remains a policy priority. If Community Empowerment falls out of policy vogue, as frequently happens with such 'headline' policies, groups starting their empowerment journey may also fall out of focus. The complexities and challenges they face will require continual engagement from the Scottish Government, statutory partners and the Scottish voluntary sector.

Conclusion

The Scottish Government's vision of empowerment requires skilled, resilient and committed individuals to volunteer in taking on additional responsibilities. Through rebranding austerity as empowerment, policy serves to de-politicize tensions and inequalities and relocates conflicts into local communities. It fails to acknowledge community diversity, inequality in community capacity, skills and the influence of local economies on the long-term success of empowerment projects. As a result, it may unfairly privilege communities most able and willing to engage, over those more disadvantaged. The Act also significantly understates the work required to successfully run community projects, applying principles of free market liberalism to voluntary groups. Organisational instability and fragility mean that such an approach is not sustainable in meeting the needs of community organisations or ensuring ongoing open and equal access to community services. However, there is scope for the Scottish Government to address the issues faced by communities based on its particular territorial advantages. Fundamentally this requires a more nuanced

understanding of empowerment activity, community diversity, the voluntary nature of community organisations and the challenges they face.

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Urban civic pride and the new localism

Tom Collins

Civic pride relates to how places promote and defend local identity and autonomy. It is often championed as a key value and aspiration of local government. This paper argues that civic pride has been under-examined in geography, and in particular the emotional meanings of pride need to be better understood. In response, I present an emotional analysis of civic pride and discuss its role in British cities, particularly in the context of urban regeneration and the UK's new localism agenda. In the latter part of the paper I provide a case study of Nottingham in England, where I employ a discourse analysis of recent urban policy and local media to examine how civic pride is being mobilised and contested in the city. Examining civic pride is important because it shapes and reflects the political values that local governments stand for and provides a basis for thinking about how emotions are used strategically (and problematically) in urban policy. This paper complements and challenges existing literature on cities by showing how civic pride shapes, but also obscures, the ideological politics of local government and how, as geographers, we might consider more seriously the ways forms of power, identity and inequality are reproduced and contested through emotions such as pride.

Key words civic pride; shame; localism; Nottingham; regeneration

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Introduction

Civic pride is an integral feature of cities, but its meaning and importance can sometimes be overlooked. As a symbol of identity, or as an ideal of local government, civic pride is part of what defines and shapes cities, and forms an important lens through which they are imagined and governed. In Britain, recent cultural events such as the London Olympics (2012), the 'Grand Depart' of the Tour de France in Leeds (2014) or the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow (2014) might suggest that a spirit of civic pride is alive and well in many cities. But local government has been under considerable pressure and strain in recent years. Not least, the impacts of austerity (post-2008) and rising social inequalities are creating serious challenges for local government, and this may be damaging civic pride.

Within this context, debates about urban regeneration and localism have raised concerns about the capacity of local government to deliver economic growth and rebuild civic pride (Jayne 2012; Jones 2013). Geographers have tended to be critical about the virtues of urban regeneration and its ability to address social inequalities (Boland 2010; Ward 2003), while the recent localism agenda, which has culminated in the passing of the 2011 Localism Act by UK parliament, has generated both enthusiasm and scepticism over its potential to empower local government and increase civic pride. Prime Minister David

Cameron meanwhile has added his voice to this civic agenda by calling for Britain 'to be far more muscular in promoting British values and the institutions that uphold them' and to stop being so 'bashful' about its sense of pride (Cameron 2014).

In so far as urban regeneration and localism have been cause for both optimism and anxiety in recent years, there is a case for re-examining what civic pride means and what its role is in urban policy. Urban geographers in the 1990s and 2000s showed how ideas such as civic pride were being championed (and manipulated) by local governments to promote post-industrial regeneration (Hall 1997; Ward 2003). This has extended to more recent interest in how neoliberalism and austerity are reshaping the civic landscape (Darling 2009; Jayne 2012). Much of this literature tends to be critical about the ways in which local governments often sell certain images of civic pride to gain public support for policy and legitimate neoliberal reform. However, in much of this work, and across geography more generally, the term lacks theoretical insight. Not only is it often neither defined nor examined explicitly by geographers, but also the *emotional* meanings and values behind civic pride tend to be ignored or left unexamined.

Even following the so-called 'emotional turn' in geography in recent years, which has made important interventions into how emotions shape and configure urban processes (Davidson *et al.* 2007; Thrift 2008),

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civic pride has not been an explicit point of debate. This is perhaps surprising, although it may reflect a wider lack of interface between urban and emotional geographies, particularly in the context of local government. Urban geography (particularly studies of urban neoliberalism) has traditionally tended to favour more structuralist or political-economy types of approach, which tend to ignore or at least underemphasise the role of emotions (Bennett 2013; Thrift 2008). This emotional deficit within urban geography might be problematic if and when it assumes structures of power, identity and inequality in cities are only the result of functional, systemic (disembodied) processes, rather than processes that reflect human concerns, desires and aspirations (Jones 2013; McGuirk 2012).

Examining civic pride is important because it shapes and reflects the values and aspirations local governments stand for and represent. It provides a basis for thinking about how and why cities promote and defend local identity and autonomy, and how emotions figure within, and are productive for, urban policy. Highlighting the emotional aspects of civic pride in particular allows us to examine how emotions help sell and dramatise the virtues of urban policy in persuasive, but also misleading, ways. There is an important parallel to observe here between the ways in which emotions both reveal and hide people's 'true colours', and the ways in which urban policy selectively promotes and conceals certain 'truths' of the city for strategic (and ideological) reasons. In this way, part of what I am arguing is that civic pride is often shaped, but also conflicted, by forms of civic shame (i.e. features of the city that do not warrant or inspire pride), and that local governments often have to negotiate across a range of competing values and interests as they seek to promote and defend civic pride. Overall, the substantive claims made in this paper do not radically disagree with, or seek to undo, much of the existing analysis on urban neoliberalism – particularly in terms of how inequalities are produced through or concealed by urban policy. Instead this paper complements, but also challenges, current literature by providing a different, more embodied analytical focus – one that acknowledges how emotions and emotional discourses are (also) integral to structures of power, identity and inequality and deserve more critical attention (Anderson and Smith 2001).

For this paper, I examine the role of civic pride in relation to urban regeneration and the new localism agenda orchestrated under the Coalition government in the UK. Debates about urban regeneration and localism provide two interlinked contexts with which to examine civic pride in a post-industrial (post-austerity) context. In short, urban regeneration provides a context within which we can explore the economic and cultural function(s) of civic pride, while localism provides a basis for examining civic pride's more formal, political

dimensions – but the two are closely linked, as I show. I also want to explore how localism has actually been 'localised' in cities, and how forms of opposition against austerity by some (particularly Labour) civic leaders reflect or provide support for alternative articulations of civic pride.

The rest of this paper is organised as follows. The next section explores how we can define and analyse civic pride in more emotional ways and better theorise its meaning and role in cities and local government. I argue that in order to understand what civic pride means and how it functions, we need to understand the emotional meanings and nuances of pride, and its relationship to shame, and bring these values into creative tension. I then move on to discuss civic pride's role in urban regeneration, suggesting that current literature provides a useful grounding to critically explore civic pride as a feature of urban neoliberalism, but currently lacks sustained (emotional) analysis. I then discuss the new localism agenda, examining the potential opportunities and limitations this may have for local government. Here I argue that the Coalition's aim of reviving a 'Victorian' spirit of civic pride in Britain has value in principle, but is unrealistic in the context of neoliberal austerity. Then in the third and final section, I present a short case study of Nottingham, and explore how Nottingham City Council is currently negotiating issues of regeneration, localism and austerity, in the name of civic pride. My analysis is underpinned by a discourse analysis of local government policy and local media, in which I pay specific attention to how emotions and emotional discourses shape and obscure wider political agendas. While geographers have employed a range of methodological approaches in relation to emotions (including phenomenology, psychoanalysis and non-representational theory), the focus on discourse and representation here specifically emphasises how emotions get used in the language of local government policy and by local politicians themselves in the media, in ways that help produce, mediate and conceal structures of power, identity and inequality (see Bennett 2013; Thrift 2008). Nottingham presents a revealing case study for understanding the political challenges involved in promoting and defending civic pride within local government, and shows how civic pride can be used in both progressive and conservative ways.

Negotiating pride and shame

Civic pride has been integral to the history of cities. It has both shaped and been shaped by a fundamental belief that cities constitute distinctive political communities where people share a sense of identity and common purpose (Mumford 1961; Hunt 2004). From the Athenian polis, to the Italian city-states, to the

cities of the industrial revolution, to the post-industrial cities of today, civic pride has represented a key value and aspiration of local government, bound up in notions of self-determination, cultural identity, citizenship and belonging. Civic pride has also connected with a history of rivalry and competition between places, and the different ways local communities construct and control territorial and social boundaries (Harvey 1989). It is perhaps surprising then that the term has had limited debate in geography. Why this might be is open to speculation: it must in part be attributed to a historic lack of engagement with emotions in geography and in particular the political role of emotions in cities. But it might also reflect a certain tendency to conflate civic pride with other related terms, such as ‘community spirit’ or ‘civic boosterism’, for instance. For Wood, civic pride represents ‘a shared and cohesive city image’ but ‘does not represent an exclusively well defined and understood construct’ (2006, 169). Ritter equally charges civic pride as a ‘vague’ and ‘imprecise’ construct that can ‘serve widely divergent purposes’ (2007, 251). Urban historians meanwhile often attribute civic pride to the realm of architecture, where grand public buildings are often said to convey civic pride (Shapely 2011). It is clear there is a degree of ambiguity in the term. But as a result of this, it is often the emotional meanings of pride and (by extension) the emotional politics of civic pride that get left unexplored and unexamined in many accounts. Put simply, there is a lack of understanding about what kind of ‘pride’ civic pride is.

Pride is a complex emotion to define. Usually it refers to a feeling of self-worth or self-respect and the different ways people value or praise their identity or community. Pride can also mean a feeling of triumph or superiority. In Western philosophy, pride has tended to be bifurcated into two, broadly opposing types – one that links pride to a sense of self-esteem, confidence and integrity, and the other that links pride with arrogance, aggression and stubbornness (Tracy *et al.* 2010). Different meanings of the term can therefore represent different traits and behaviours, and these can be shaped by particular cultural beliefs about what one can and should be proud of (Smith 1998; Dyson 2006).

One important quality of pride is that it is aspirational. It is aspirational to the extent that people with pride tend to place high value on self-improvement and achieving the best for oneself or for society. Pride, in this sense, is a value that tends to generate certain ideals or expectations to live up to. Failure to live up to these ideals or expectations can damage or afflict one’s pride, and in some cases lead to feelings of self-doubt and shame. Probyn (2005) discusses how pride and shame are closely linked and have a dialectical relationship – for just as shame seems to embody the very opposite of pride (i.e. a lack of self-worth, a lack of

aspiration, guilt etc.), pride also needs to assert its distance or at times actively deny shame in order to retain its virtue and integrity. In this view, shame can be both the force that galvanises pride and the shadow that haunts it (Munt 2000). The two are therefore often co-dependent and bring each other into visibility.

A corollary of this pride–shame tension is that pride often tends to celebrate the positive and ignore or deny the negative – such that pride often appears strong and self-righteous (Wind-Cowie and Gregory 2011). As studies of nationalism have shown, pride often grows stronger when people feel their identity is under threat, and this often results from or leads to people being defensive about their beliefs and values (Fortier 2005). As I demonstrate later on in the paper, the spectre of change and uncertainty brought about by issues such as global capitalism, austerity and the loss of political autonomy in cities is to some extent creating the conditions for a resurgence of civic pride in these kinds of defensive ways. The danger here is that too much pride may encourage people to be resistive to change or blind to alternative viewpoints, thus limiting any drive or imperative to be self-critical or reflexive about what one’s pride means and what it represents.

The analytical task here is to observe how pride as an emotion connects with civic pride as a political value, and how different expressions of civic pride are promoted and defended within local government. The *civic* aspect is clearly important, because it is the spatial-political frame within which different forms of pride are expressed and mobilised. The word ‘civic’ itself may sound, to some, rather ceremonial and authoritative, but there is something critical (emotive, even) in the way civicness constructs and celebrates places as sites of *shared* meaning, with supposedly shared values and aspirations; that civic pride is not just a matter for local government but something that represents a wider sense of unity and collective responsibility in the city (Mumford 1961). This idealism may of course be problematic, or misleading, if and when certain images of civic pride fail to incorporate or account for local division and conflict in the city, or fail to acknowledge that some people may *not* be proud of their city. Civic pride itself may be cause for division or conflict if people have different aspirations over what their city’s ‘civic pride’ should be and represent – or when policy, promoted in the name of civic pride, serves the interests of some people more than others.

While it can be difficult to define emotions precisely and translate them into writing, geographers should recognise how they are active components of how places are imagined, governed and contested – and that emotions like pride play a role in shaping and configuring political imaginaries and spatial practices (Thrift 2008). As I show, it is not simply a question of how civic pride gets mobilised within and through policy and

political discourse, but how issues of pride and shame within the city are managed and (re)appropriated in the name of civic pride.

Urban regeneration and civic pride

If geographers have asserted any kind of overarching paradigm to describe and explain the changing nature of cities in the past few decades, it has been the rise of neoliberalism and the increasingly entrepreneurial nature of local government (Harvey 1989; Boyle 2011). This shift towards neoliberalism has involved a fundamental re-imagining of local government – no longer are local authorities simply conceived as ‘managers’ of local services and welfare, they now (also) represent strategic players in the post-industrial economy, facilitating growth and leveraging new forms of public and private investment. The gradual decline of Keynesianism, the loss of industry and jobs, the flight of the middle-classes to the suburbs – leaving an ailing inner-city in many places – had by the 1980s and 1990s signalled a new demand for urban regeneration in Britain, and an opportunity for local governments to restructure local economies and restore civic pride. As McGuirk notes, geographers have approached this rise of the post-industrial neoliberal city in different ways, but most accept the contention that

through rescaling the geographies of governance, the urban itself is taken to have become an increasingly important strategic scale through which neoliberal accumulation and a complementary array of regulatory strategies can be institutionalised and advanced. (2012, 259)

Given this broad context, my focus is on how civic pride is mobilised in the context of cultural regeneration strategies, and how different dimensions of pride play a role in shaping these strategies and their outcomes. I claim that civic pride can be used as a ‘soft tool’ by local governments to leverage investment and persuade local citizens about the positive impacts regeneration can offer; at the same time, however, such efforts to promote civic pride can also undermine a city’s ability or willingness to accept ‘shame’ and address issues of inequality and exclusion.

Cultural regeneration has served a number of purposes in cities – to promote local culture and identity, attract business and tourism, combat unemployment, foster cultural and creative enterprise, and increase consumption (Boland 2010; Florida 2012). Cultural regeneration has been a way of orchestrating a revival in urban culture – both to escape (and forget) the scars of industrial decline, and to refashion urban centres around new ideas of culture, creativity and the arts. Critical accounts have highlighted how such strategies often promise much in the way of new jobs, tourism growth, and improved cultural infrastructure,

but often result in many negative consequences – a commercialisation of culture, a lack of trickle-down benefits for local people and, as Boyle notes, a scenario where ‘local welfare budgets ... become [increasingly] diverted into often-speculative city marketing projects, hallmark events and downtown aesthetic make-overs’ (2011, 2674). Under such conditions, cultural regeneration tends to invest in and privilege certain forms of culture and creativity more than others, and tends to exclude lower income groups that are unable to afford the new cultural consumerism on offer (or feel alienated by it) (Boland 2010). However, as others have shown, cultural regeneration may also lead to the emergence of more alternative and radical interpretations of what local culture and pride should do, say and represent – exposing a more diverse and fragmented civic landscape (Jones 2013; Jayne 2012). Such alternatives may be the grit in the civic oyster for local governments who want to uphold a particular image of the city, but how far such alternatives ultimately reshape the politics of civic pride is less certain.

Urban geographers have tended to describe how civic pride operates as a legitimation tool within cultural regeneration – a rhetoric to help promote a ‘shared vision’ for the city and promote the positive impacts of regeneration. It has also been considered a ‘bread and circuses’ type of rhetoric to help increase public support for policy and steer attention away from its more negative implications (Harvey 1989; McCann 2013). But rarely do geographers expand on what civic pride is (or means) here, how it is being used and reformulated under cultural regeneration, and what the role of pride is as an emotion. This may limit our analysis of why civic pride is important for local governments and why it is being mobilised in the service of neoliberalism.

Harvey, for instance, in his ground-breaking paper on urban entrepreneurialism, states how ‘the orchestrated production of urban image can if successful ... create a sense of social solidarity, civic pride and loyalty to place’ (1989, 14). Although it is not the paper’s main point of focus, Harvey does not explain what civic pride is, show how it is different to social solidarity and loyalty, or fully explicate why feeling proud and showing pride for one’s city was important for the rise of urban entrepreneurialism. The point he does briefly make is that concepts like civic pride became important in places like Baltimore in the 1980s as a defensive, unifying rhetoric for local government to use to convince urban communities that local identity and prosperity were not being eroded or undermined under changes in global capitalism. But while Harvey recognises how this produced ‘mechanisms for social control’ within cities, his de-centring of civic pride as a more minor outcome of neoliberal processes obscures the ways in which the emotional, the political and the

economic were working together under urban entrepreneurialism – particularly in terms of how civic pride was also a necessary driving force behind ‘the orchestrated production of urban image’ in many places, and helped make certain narratives of urban change more meaningful (and more convincing) to local people.

Hall’s (1997) study of cultural regeneration in Birmingham similarly shows how discourses of civic pride were part of Birmingham City Council’s re-imaging plans in the early 1990s. But here again Hall does not really explore what civic pride is or was in this context, and how pride (the emotion) figured within the discourses he describes. Hall cannot, to my mind, adequately examine how ‘local mythologies of industrial pride’ were important to wider regimes of change if the emotional and political meanings and nuances of pride are missing from the analysis. However, in fairness, he does show how different constructions of civic identity and acts of civic commemoration through public art can serve to produce uneven narratives of social and historic change, and that cultural regeneration can be orchestrated in such a way so as to close off more critical voices and alternative practices.

Boland’s (2010) analysis of Liverpool as European Capital of Culture provides another example in which civic pride surfaces within the analysis but remains undefined and under-explored. Through analysing different perceptions and experiences of the Capital of Culture project across the city, Boland ‘challenges the hyperbole of culture-led transformation to reveal different geographies of culture, different cultural experiences and different socio-economic realities’ (2010, 640). There is clearly a lot of pride and shame bubbling under the analysis, but because he does not explicitly employ an emotional lens, nor provide a close-reading of the participant quotes he uses, the emotional nuances and psychological dimensions of people’s experiences are left un/under-explored. The contrast he conveys between the optimism and aspirational language of the city’s leaders and officials from the Liverpool Culture Company (who managed the project) and the pessimism – and anger – of those residents in the city who felt spatially and culturally excluded from the spectacle (such as the residents of Toxteth and Norris Green) is convincingly illustrated, however. But again, my point would be that a more serious examination of pride might tease out some of the underlying dynamics of why the Capital of Culture project was so divisive and why different perceptions and experiences of the project spoke to different understandings of civic pride and different experiences of civic engagement.

The executive summary of the original Capital of Culture bid for Liverpool in fact shows that one of the objectives was ‘developing a positive profile and image

of the city in the region, Europe and internationally, and increasing the confidence and pride of its citizens’ (Liverpool Culture Company 2002, 301). It clearly did not increase the confidence and pride of some citizens if Boland’s observations are anything to go by. As Boyle (1997) more tentatively suggests, this should encourage us to think critically about the way pride can be used (too easily, perhaps) as an empty buzzword or ‘woolly metric’ of impact within urban policy, and how this may mask or steer attention away from issues of social exclusion, deprivation and disengagement.

In these ways, current literature on urban neoliberalism might benefit from this more emotional perspective in order to better understand the underlying logic (s) and mechanisms(s) behind urban policies, and how emotions can be used in ways that help serve or protect ideological interests. Clearly there is a certain advantage to be gained from the slipperiness of emotional terms like civic pride, because they can be used in such a way so as to be purposefully fuzzy and vague to suit a particular purpose (Ritter 2007). It then becomes difficult to hold local governments accountable for ‘succeeding’ or ‘failing’ on civic pride – which is precisely why we need to scrutinise the politics of civic pride carefully and understand who the winners and losers are. However, as I demonstrate later in the context of Nottingham, civic pride represents no fixed political agenda – it can operate across a range of ideological interests and values. Just as certain discourses and representations of civic pride can serve to hide, conceal or limit an awareness of the uneven consequences of neoliberal urban regeneration, civic pride can also be promoted and defended in other, more progressive, more antagonistic ways and re-appropriated in the name of localism.

Localism and civic pride

I now want to examine how civic pride is being promoted and defended in the context of localism and austerity. This section outlines how civic pride is not simply a neoliberal ‘tool’ within urban regeneration strategies, but connects to and helps shape a much wider political philosophy, connected to the freedoms and constraints local governments operate within and contest over. There are critical linkages between urban regeneration and localism that are relevant for understanding the nuances and subtleties of civic pride – linkages that further reveal how the emotional dimensions of pride can both shape and obscure the ideological politics of local (as well as central) government.

The nature of local governance in British cities has changed markedly over the past few decades. Local economic partnerships, strategic authorities and growth coalitions for instance have been established in most

major cities, a range of city-regional bodies and national programmes have emerged (such as the recent Core Cities and City Deal programmes), while globalisation has significantly enhanced the operating scale and strategic oversight required of local government (Harvey 1989; Boyle 2011). Despite the increasing complexity and multi-institutional nature of local governance however, the overall planning and direction of urban policy, and the political accountability this assumes, still remains much the prerogative and responsibility of local councils and local authorities. While British cities, like most cities in the world, have become inextricably dependent on and productive for the global market and the state, it is local government that still represents the institutional identity and autonomy of local places and the people living there.

The 2011 Localism Act was a ground-breaking but controversial moment for local government and democracy in the UK (Featherstone *et al.* 2012; Lowndes and Pratchett 2012). Although devolution debates had been going on a long time before 2011 within British politics (see Clarke and Cochrane 2013), localism emerged formally as a policy framework and legislative package with the release of the Coalition's green paper 'Local growth: realising every place's potential' (DCLG 2010). This called for more decentralised powers and freedoms for local government, and an end to a culture of 'Whitehall knows best' (2010, 3). The Act is wide-ranging in its remit: it includes, among other things, new powers for councils to adjust tax and business rates, powers to protect local assets and powers for community groups to have more say over local planning issues and service provision. While critics have attacked the ideological underpinnings of localism as a smokescreen for neoliberalism, and as an excuse to withdraw state welfare funding, for others localism offers hope in strengthening local democracy, fostering civic engagement and facilitating local enterprise (Featherstone *et al.* 2011; Evans *et al.* 2013). Indeed, the green paper proclaims

[w]e believe that these changes will not only help produce a growing economy, but also heighten civic pride, with businesses and communities increasingly enabled to help themselves grow. (DCLG 2010, 9)

It would be difficult to argue that civic pride forms any kind of mechanism or policy *within* the new localism agenda, as though it were a legislative instrument for local governments to use or implement. Rather, as the quote above alludes to, localism has the potential to heighten civic pride, but also recast the meaning of civic pride as a kind of nostalgic, noble pursuit. For as some have contended, what is distinctive about the new localism agenda is that it appears to be harking back to a 'Victorian' spirit of civic pride; of a

time when cities and towns were sites of fierce municipal autonomy and local leadership (see Stanley 2011; Shapely 2012). The Victorian city represents, in this view, a model of civic pride and local enterprise, when local government was free from the grip of Westminster and when civic leaders had the ambition and purpose to expand the civic realm and reap the benefits of industrial expansion (Hunt 2004). The new localism is thus a kind of 'neo-localism' recast from the Victorian era, predicated on the notion that it is local, not central, government that can best represent and serve urban areas and revive civic pride. As Bennett and Orr describe,

The localism position might be said to position local government as a key vehicle for forming a sense of identity and direction for communities. This view incorporates a notion of civic pride, or what Joseph Chamberlain (1885) called 'local spirit' or 'municipal patriotism'. It implies a correspondence of interest between the institution and the locality, and emphasises councils' role in shaping identity, protecting local interests and expressing local values. (2013, 6)

As I have suggested in relation to urban regeneration, there is a certain narrative of revival and transformation here that helps legitimate, but also obscure from view, the ideological values underpinning this neo-localism agenda. As we read into the subtleties of this narrative, and the politics at stake, we should pay attention to how pride, as a word, and as a sentiment of nostalgia and aspiration, helps romanticise the government's intervention and steers the narrative in particular ways. For example, on criticising what he saw as a gradual decline in municipal power within Britain, the former Communities and Local Government Minister Eric Pickles championed localism in 2011 by suggesting,

It's no surprise that as powers have been leeches from local government, English cities have declined and stagnated ... Can you imagine Joseph Chamberlain sitting meekly filling in forms so that some remote civil servant could measure his performance? Everything that this Government is about is about putting power back where it belongs in City, County and Town Halls ... I am not advocating some kind of 'Back to the Future' municipal power. We need to go even further – 'Chamberlain plus' ... [We must also recognise that] the building blocks of great cities are strong and cohesive neighbourhoods – where people have a strong sense of belonging and pride. (2011, np)

It is not only important to note here Pickles' reference to pride as a 'building block' of great cities, but the way in which the speech subtly draws on the moral dimensions of pride to help authenticate the Coalition's intervention. For instance, Pickles makes reference to the legacy of Joseph Chamberlain as a figure of inspiration and someone that local govern-

ment leaders today should aspire to – intimating that Chamberlain's own 'pride' would not have stomached today's levels of central government oversight and bureaucracy. Pride, as I have shown, often places high ideals and expectations on an individual or society to live up to – it compels people to excel and aspire to more. Pickles thus states explicitly that '[w]e need to go further – "Chamberlain plus"', in effect pronouncing localism as not just a project of revival but of (superior) transformation. We might caution against reading too much into Pickles' intentions here, as though pride was worked into the speech explicitly. But we can at least infer here that, in subtle ways, emotions and emotive discourses can help make policy sound more persuasive and commanding, and draw attention away from other, less popular, issues such as austerity (Bennett 2013).

For, of course, the fundamental 'flaw' of the new localism agenda, as it currently stands, is that recent austerity measures have vastly limited the capacity of local government to embrace this historic return to civic pride, let alone sustain local services and welfare (Featherstone *et al.* 2012). At the same time the Conservatives are calling for 'Chamberlain plus' and 'putting power back where it belongs', they have drastically cut local government finances and forced local populations to pick up the pieces (Lowndes and Pratchett 2012). This illustrates an important point about how civic pride and localism are not simply 'willed in' by local government, but are dependent on, or rather built on the foundations of, the economic security and cultural vitality of places as self-governing entities. The real engine of civic pride in the Victorian cities was not simply a heady enthusiasm for municipal patriotism, but the immense financial power of urban elites who shaped (and profited from) this civic expansion – particularly the leading industrialists, businessmen and philanthropists who helped finance the new 'civic gospel' (Hunt 2004; Briggs 1963). It seems that for all the Conservative's nostalgia for reviving a lost heyday of civic pride in Britain, they have perhaps forgotten that it was as much the financial autonomy of cities and the localism of industry itself that enabled this civic expansion.

The Coalition's aim (now continuing under Conservative leadership) of reducing the budget deficit and cutting back on welfare spending has encouraged a backlash from many city councils across Britain, who fear that vital public services are under serious threat. In 2012, for instance, three northern city council leaders (representing Liverpool, Sheffield and Newcastle) published a letter to the government in the *Observer* warning of the dire consequences that could result from the scale and pace of austerity. It warned of how

the unfairness of the government's cuts is in danger of creating a deeply divided nation ... [w]e urge them to stop what they are doing now and listen to our warnings before the forces of social unrest start to smoulder. (*Observer* 2012, np)

There have been many other warnings and protests like this since, across the local authority sector (including, more recently, from Conservative-led councils), which have resonated with a much wider grassroots and trade union-led anti-austerity movement (see: Featherstone *et al.* 2012; *Observer* 2015). It would perhaps be romantic or beside the point to claim that this resistance to austerity shows a rising up of 'civic pride', but such acts do speak to values of civic solidarity and political defiance, which themselves speak to, if not represent, pride's resistive and aspirational qualities. The urban poor may not need 'civic pride' as much as they need good jobs and housing, but these kinds of messages are important because they let local communities know that their local government is (or appears to be) taking matters of social justice and welfare provision seriously. These messages may be ineffective in the short term in limiting the impacts of austerity, but may in the longer term serve to strengthen the reputation and political credibility of local governments as the flag-bearers and defenders of civic pride and local interests (Bennett and Orr 2013). What this suggests is that, while urban regeneration and localism provide contexts in which we might be critical or circumspect over the way civic pride is being mobilised and manipulated within local (or central) government, civic pride connects with multiple political projects and movements within local government that can be as much antagonistic and progressive in their outlook as they can be conservative or neoliberal, or used for political gain (Newman 2013). The geographical task is to understand how these processes are rooted locally and how local articulations of civic pride shape and reconfigure wider political processes and social outcomes.

The pride of Nottingham

This case study of Nottingham demonstrates how we might approach civic pride empirically and examine it within the context of local policy and politics. As I outlined earlier, I employ here a discourse analysis of urban policy and local media in order to examine how and why civic pride both shapes and obscures the ideological politics of local government. The material draws from a wider PhD research project I undertook between 2012 and 2015 that explored the meaning and importance of civic pride across the city according to different stakeholders. For the purposes of this paper, I gathered a range of materials and documentary evidence covering the period of c. 2003–2015 – including

local policy documents, media releases, news articles and census records – and conducted a content search of pride and civic pride within this material. This involved searching for key terms such as civic and pride (and other related words and phrases), and examining their emotional and political meaning and resonance (or absence thereof) in the context of Nottingham and wider civic issues. My aim was to triangulate local government statements, strategies and policies that mention or explicitly use civic pride with the city's current political and economic development and trajectory, in order to assess how much (and at times how little) civic pride is being mobilised within local government and what its impact may be. As I show, this period of Nottingham's recent past and present demonstrates how a mixture of context, political expediency and entrenched civic values can produce multiple forms and expressions of civic pride within local government, which resonate with wider urban processes and struggles.

Nottingham is a city in the East Midlands region of England; historically a more provincial second-tier city, it is now officially recognised as a 'Core City'¹ within Britain's national economy. It has a city population of over 300 000 and a metropolitan population of over 700 000. The city is known, among other things, for its sport, associations with the legend of Robin Hood, 19th-century manufacturing prowess and a somewhat under-celebrated literary heritage (its associations with Lord Byron, D.H. Lawrence and Alan Sillitoe, most notably). 'The city has a long and proud history', claims the council's *Nottingham Plan to 2020* visioning strategy, but concedes 'poverty persists in many communities, side by side with prosperity' (One Nottingham 2010, 6). The strategy laments how 'for some, aspirations are low; too many people do not share the city's optimism' (2010, 6).

Inequalities have grown significantly since the economic downturn of 2008. Research from the Office for National Statistics showed that in 2010 Nottingham had the lowest average per-household disposable income level of all UK cities (ONS 2012). This is partly due to a high student population in the city, although post-recession labour market figures suggest that 'residents employed in Nottingham ... fell by 7% between 2008 and 2011, compared to a fall of less than 1% for all of the Core Cities' (ESRB [Economic Strategy Research Bureau] 2014, 4). The ESRB's report suggests that although Nottingham has emerging strengths in sectors such as healthcare and pharmaceuticals, bio-science research and creative industries, the city is stifled by so-called 'low value' employment concentrations (i.e. a lack of financial and professional sector work) and a marked lack of skills and qualifications.

The city has also had a reputation for gun crime and violence. In the early 2000s, a few fatal shootings and

an infamous *Panorama* television programme² about night-life in the city brought national media attention to Nottingham and left the city with the shameful title of 'Gun Capital of the UK'. It was shortly after, in 2003, that the council released their 'Respect for Nottingham' strategy, which aimed to tackle anti-social behaviour and other 'street crimes' within the city. The strategy aimed to 'clean up the City's streets, take an uncompromising stand against begging, street prostitution and drug dealing and restore civic pride in the City'. (Drug culture was cited at the time as one of the key causes of violence in the city). The Respect for Nottingham strategy (Nottingham City Council 2003), like the Liverpool Capital of Culture bid, does not define civic pride or explain why civic pride is in crisis or in need of revival in Nottingham – it simply assumes that by 'cleaning up the City's streets', civic pride can be restored. Critical geographers in the past have often interpreted this kind of 'cleaning up the city' rhetoric as typical of the neoliberal 'revanchist' movement that Neil Smith so powerfully described in the 1990s, although it is clear that by the mid-to-late 2000s, with Nottingham's economic ambitions at stake, both growing paranoia within the city council and genuine fears over safety in some parts of the city meant a new image and narrative for the city was needed – a narrative in which, one could say, pride needed to triumph over shame.

In response to concerns over the city's reputation, the Labour-run council began in c.2006 to rebrand the city with a new slogan of 'A safe, clean, ambitious Nottingham: a city we're all proud of' – a slogan that, in various formats and styles, became branded across the city, in policy documents, on buses, on street banners and on the council's website. Pride effectively became emblazoned onto the city. The Labour Party meanwhile, who currently have a strong majority in the council, have recently released their 2015 Manifesto with the leading tagline 'Proud of Nottingham: a positive politics from Nottingham Labour'. Typically, however, the Manifesto contains no definition or explanation of what 'Proud' means, nor does it describe any kind of civic pride policy (other than urging the residents of Nottingham to 'take pride in and responsibility for their neighbourhoods'); the Manifesto instead presents a much broader set of policies and aspirations for the city. As I noted earlier, pride is an emotion that can sometimes discourage or undermine people's willingness to question or criticise themselves and the values they stand for – by its own nature, pride tries to circumvent scrutiny by appearing to speak for itself (which, in the adjective form here, almost works as a speech act, or performative, to pronounce Nottingham as being collectively 'proud'). While the precise ruminations of how and why the word 'Proud' became so central to the council's strategy are unclear

without further empirical insight, it is reasonable to suggest that it helped (re)emphasise the council's political authority and integrity, and act as a visual signifier for the city's new 'positive politics'. Reports have suggested violent crime in Nottingham has fallen in recent years (*Nottingham Post* 2015), which may come as a relief as much as a source of pride for the council – but whether this reduction in crime has led to an increase in civic pride among local citizens is another question, particularly given the extent of Nottingham's deprivation and the recent impacts of austerity.

The *Nottingham Plan to 2020* states that one of the council's policy aims (headed under the theme 'Neighbourhood Nottingham') is for 'residents to be proud of their city'. Here they urge people 'to take more control over their neighbourhoods and the services that are delivered there, helping to rebuild civic pride and establish better forms of governance for the 21st century' (One Nottingham 2010, 44). Once again, however, civic pride is not explicitly defined – neither in terms of its relevance to Nottingham, nor how or why taking control of local services will lead to greater civic pride. Again, why does civic pride need 'rebuilding' and who will benefit? We can infer that the council are attempting to capture the spirit of the new localism agenda here (or indeed the Conservative's 'Big Society'), of rebuilding local democracy and empowering citizens to have their own role in making civic pride. But without any explicit definition or explanation of civic pride, the impact or role this may have may be missed and will be crucially unaccounted for; more cynically, it reveals how austerity is encouraging the mobilisation of potentially hollowed-out 'empowerment rhetoric' to justify the cutting-back of the welfare state – essentially asking people to 'do more' and rewarding them with 'civic pride' (Featherstone *et al.* 2012).

A key structural difficulty Nottingham faces is the gap between inner-city areas of relatively high deprivation, such as Sneinton and St Ann's, and areas of lower deprivation outside the official city boundaries, in suburban areas like Rushcliffe and Gedling. This situation is not uncommon for most metropolitan cities, of course. The council's *Growth Plan* (2012), which lays out the city's economic strategy for the next 5–10 years, describes this as a 'standard pattern in urban economics', and gives somewhat tentative hope in the possibility that Nottingham might overcome this (seemingly inevitable) structural bias:

This is a standard pattern in urban economics ... The ability [to significantly] change the structural composition of the city away from this model is limited, but the Growth Plan can attempt to address the barriers that exist for many Nottingham core city residents to access higher-skilled job opportunities, by targeting training and employment support at these residents. (Nottingham City Council 2012, 12)

Unlike the *Nottingham Plan to 2020*, which is a much wider-ranging policy document, the growth plan does not mention pride or civic pride, even if the language and framing of the document largely reflects the city's positive aspirations. The absence of the word pride in the growth plan is perhaps noteworthy – especially given how frequently the word 'Proud' appears in other council documentation and publicity materials. It perhaps indicates that the council is taking a more 'sensible' and exacting approach to the economy – reining-in more 'fluffy' emotional words to suit a more credible economic narrative. Or more simply, it indicates that on certain matters of public policy, explicit appeals to civic pride may not be necessary or advantageous for local government, and are made more effective elsewhere.

The growth plan does however refer to an influential public-private investment group called 'Invest in Nottingham'. Invest in Nottingham is an agency operating on behalf of the council, promoting creative enterprise in the city. One of its flagship projects has been to profile the 'Creative Class' in Nottingham, borrowing explicitly from Richard Florida's influential work in this area. The project highlights creative individuals and companies, and celebrates their role and contribution in the city:

Building on [Florida's] concept ... Invest in Nottingham ... established the Creative Class to profile and celebrate entrepreneurs and companies [that are] essential for the growth of the city's economy. They are powerful ambassadors for the city and great role models for the next generation of entrepreneurs. (Nottingham City Council 2012, 41)

Florida (2012) himself has not said a great deal about civic pride's role within creative cities, although he would probably recognise the value of these 'powerful ambassadors for the city' for building a strong 'people climate' in Nottingham and boosting the city's competitive advantage. Invest in Nottingham is also involved in the city's plans to develop a 'Creative Quarter' in the old Lace Market area of Nottingham – a project launched in 2012 by the council. To date, the council is aiming to source and match-fund up to £60 million through the central government's City Deal programme to invest in creative businesses and promote growth in this area of the city. Again it is not easy to ascertain what the precise role or importance of civic pride is for the Creative Quarter from any of the released documentation, although the *Growth Plan* makes reference to how it is an 'incubator without walls ... to lead the development of Nottingham's new economy and serve as an emblem of our long-term aspirations for the city' (Nottingham City Council 2012, 59). Whether the Creative Quarter turns into an incubator with walls for those 'who do not share the

city's optimism' and do not have the high-value skills to command or benefit from this new creative economy is another question.

Although the Creative Quarter plans are still unfolding, it is clear that the city council is aiming to leverage the civic-mindedness of creative individuals to help promote the city and legitimate investment in this area (Boyle 2011). Are these the kinds of Victorian-style civic leaders the Coalition had in mind to take on the mantle of localism and revive civic pride? We perhaps should not assume that it is civic pride necessarily that is driving the Creative Quarter's aims or aspirations, nor indeed that creative individuals are necessarily 'proud' of their city. But to the extent that this a project based in promoting Nottingham's image, securing the city's competitive advantage among other Core Cities, and marrying creative and cultural enterprise with new growth aspirations, it may be worth stopping to ask what kind of civic pride narrative emerges from this project and whether it will help legitimate or undermine the role of the council in 'shaping identity, protecting local interests and expressing local values' (Bennett and Orr 2013). The council has given its reassurance that the Creative Quarter will target training and employment for 'core city residents', though one cannot help but wonder whether there might be a certain hyperbole to the rhetoric – especially given that the Lace Market area already contains multiple high-end businesses and residential properties and, in spatial terms, is to some extent insulated from Nottingham's ailing inner-city (Boland 2010).

The impacts of austerity meanwhile have also been a major issue in Nottingham. In a similar vein to the aforementioned councils in northern England, the Labour Party have been highly vocal about the cuts. In a public engagement release for a recent Budget Consultation (2015/16), for example, the council website states:

the Council believes cities like Nottingham are being treated unfairly by the Government ... Nottingham has lost more in revenue spending power per household than places in the affluent south. (Nottingham City Council 2015)

Friction between the city council and central government has surfaced a few times in recent years – in 2013, for instance, the council was accused of spending local taxpayers' money to fund party-based union activities and propagandise against the cuts (one accusation was that the 'Proud' slogans used by the council were too similar to Labour Party communications). In 2011 the leader of the council Jon Collins rebuffed earlier accusations of the propagandising by saying 'I'm damn sure that at Nottingham City Council there is absolutely no political gesturing in the very tough budget decisions we've had to make as a result of the government's savage cuts' (*The Commentator* 2013, np).

As I have argued, the push towards rediscovering a 'Victorian spirit' of civic pride in British cities through localism has been largely short-circuited in recent years by austerity. But as councils like Nottingham, Sheffield, Liverpool and Newcastle are showing, austerity is not happening without a fight. The emotive, moralistic language being used within the anti-austerity movement illustrates once again how emotions play a role in dramatising public policy debates and legitimating ideological positions: the 'savage' cuts, places being 'treated unfairly', the 'positive politics' of the Labour Party being pitted against what the three northern leaders' letter describes as 'a brand of Conservatism that has no social conscience'. Such sentiments may tell us more about the combative nature of party-based politics than they do about civic pride, but as I have argued, such displays of solidarity and defiance from local leaders, while probably limited in halting the broader impacts of austerity, will surely bolster the political credibility (and negotiating hand) with which local governments might represent or mobilise civic pride in the future. In Nottingham's case, the council's rather bolshie stance to austerity may well be the kind of 'index of credibility' (Thrift 2008) it needs to secure future votes in the city and drive forward investment projects like the Creative Quarter.

In briefly examining how Nottingham City Council have negotiated issues of crime, urban regeneration and austerity in recent years then, it is possible to show how civic pride operates across a range of political values and projects, geographic scales and emotional registers, and that the inherent antagonism between pride and shame has an important, yet at times unrequited, bearing on wider social and economic struggles. The telling contrast between the entrepreneurial vision being put forth for the Creative Quarter and the apparent scepticism within the council to overcome Nottingham's ('inevitable') structural inequalities perhaps shows us that civic pride is not separate from, but is productive for, a neoliberal urban agenda; but as the council's spirited response to crime and austerity show, civic pride can also be a force for resistance and transformation, in both its message and through the actions it inspires. As it stands, however, the scripting of civic pride as a policy ambition, and the use of the word 'Proud' as an anchor for a new (anti-Conservative) 'positive politics' in Nottingham, perhaps needs much more fleshing out and direct demonstration of its meaning, use and value if it is to be productive and empowering for ordinary citizens.

Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that civic pride has been under-theorised in geography and that the emotional meanings of pride need to be better understood. In

response, I have examined what civic pride means, the different ways it can be conceptualised and mobilised, and its role within British urban policy and cities more generally. There is a rich history connected to civic pride, representing the different ways people promote and defend local identity and autonomy. But it is also a highly ambiguous term that can be constructed and mobilised in different ways to suit different purposes. While civic pride can help sell the virtues of urban regeneration and appeal to a unified image of the city, at the same time it can steer attention away from the inequalities associated with urban regeneration and legitimate often speculative neoliberal investment (Boyle 2011). The 2011 Localism Act meanwhile has provided a new legislative framework and policy agenda for increasing local autonomy and rebuilding civic pride in British cities. But the recent impacts of austerity, and the potential romanticism associated with reviving a Victorian model of civic pride that is arguably out of sync with modern global economies and local governance structures, may, in the short term at least, undermine the potential for localism to radically transform or increase civic pride. At the same time however, the anti-austerity movement within local government demonstrates how civic pride can also be shaped by, and constrained within, a much more antagonistic political landscape, from which more progressive civic agendas may emerge, based in values of social justice and civic solidarity. Civic pride has been an enduring feature of British cities, but it can form and mobilise out of past, present and future conflicts and struggles – exposing how often, where there is pride, there is also shame (or a distinct lack of pride), which should encourage us to consider what civic pride may be hiding or battling against as it seeks to unite the city.

This paper has sought to complement but also challenge existing literature on cities and neoliberalism by filling in some of its emotional gaps and showing how emotions configure, but also obscure, the ideological politics of local government. My case study of Nottingham suggests the beginnings of a much wider research agenda around civic pride and its role in local government. We might, for example, consider how Nottingham's civic pride differs or shares experience with other cities across Britain, how competition between cities affects civic pride and indeed whether there is a distinctly 'British' approach to civic pride. We could also explore how individuals and communities perceive and mobilise civic pride at more localised scales (neighbourhood or community, say), and how civic pride becomes contested within and beyond local government (see Darling 2009; Jones 2013).

Emotions are a challenging area for urban geographers because they cannot so easily be aligned to a straightforward theory of political-economy, historic materialism or social justice. They instead form something of a 'hidden centre' within urban policy and

political discourse; a set of complex, under-the-surface energies and value systems that are central to how policies and politics are dramatised, narrated and legitimated; challenging because they are often communicated through the actions and practices they inspire rather than through any direct words or images that attempt to explain their meaning. Emotions are something that urban geographers should continue to engage with because they shape how cities are imagined, experienced and governed, and underline the values for which local governments stand.

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Notes

- 1 'Core City' status is an official status designated to members of the UK Core Cities Group – a local government leadership body that represents the ten largest regional economies in England, Scotland and Wales, outside of London.
- 2 BBC Panorama, 'Clidnt Give a XXXX 4 Lst Ordrs?', broadcast 6 June 2004 (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/3742481.stm>) Accessed 9 January 2016.

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Article

The *Kleinhaus* and the Politics of Localism in German Architecture and Planning, c. 1910

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Abstract

As an antidote to the substandard tenement apartment, the ideal of the “small house” (*Kleinhaus*) was ubiquitous in housing debates in Germany before World War One. Denoting a modestly sized two-story family house aligned with the street, it had its origins in the Middle Ages, during which it was constructed to serve the humble domestic needs of urban craftsmen who lived and worked in thriving trade cities including Lübeck, Bremen, Hamburg, Augsburg, Nuremberg, and Ulm. For modern promoters of low-density alternatives to the tenement, the *Kleinhaus* was an ideal model for mass appropriation. Unlike foreign and untranslatable dwelling models like the “villa” and the “cottage,” the *Kleinhaus* conveyed something that was both urban and quintessentially Germanic. It was thus enlisted by housing reformers to strengthen local cultural identity whilst raising the standards of the nation’s housing stock. This article examines the significance of the *Kleinhaus* in fostering dialogue between the fields of architecture and planning, and considers its embeddedness in a wider project of cultural nationalism in pre-war Germany.

Keywords

affordable housing; architectural typology; cottage; family; Germany; Heimat; localism; nationalism; photography; urban design

Issue

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1. Introduction

After stumbling off the main road of Glockengießerstrasse and encountering them in a narrow alley, one could be forgiven for momentarily forgetting one’s urban location in the center of Lübeck’s old town (Figure 1). Unified by a plain coat of whitewash and a generous pitched roof, these alley houses exemplified a residential type that by the early 20th century came to be known as the “small house” (*Kleinhaus*). The *Kleinhaus* typically described a house of no more than two stories, which could be detached, duplex, or terraced, but which was easily recognizable as a self-contained single-family unit by the presence of three windows and a separate entry that was aligned directly with the street—usually a cozy residential path concealed from the main traffic artery. Clad in brick or plaster and featuring a shingled pitched roof with

dormers and a chimney, its exterior was necessarily modest and contained minimal ornamentation. The exemplary *Kleinhaus* was likewise economical in plan, featuring usually no more than four rooms, with a combined kitchen and living room as the locus of family life on the ground floor and separate bedrooms for parents and children on the upper floor. It sometimes contained a small private garden with a stable to accommodate a few chickens and perhaps even a goat (Behrendt, 1916, pp. 210–212).

Relics of late medieval and early modern planning, residential quarters of *Kleinhäuser* (“small houses”) could still easily be found in historic trade cities like Lübeck, Bremen, Hamburg, Augsburg, Nuremberg, and Ulm in the late 19th century, even after frequent outbreaks of cholera led many reformers to decry their presence in the name of public health. They received

renewed appreciation in the first decade of the 20th century, initially amongst art historians and conservative promoters of heritage protection, but increasingly amongst urban reformers and architects who saw in the *Kleinhaus* an ideal dwelling type that could provide a more locally-inflected solution to the much debated “housing question.” By examining the presence of the *Kleinhaus* in housing debates, this article establishes the turn to localism as a constitutive feature of German architectural modernism and the nascent field of planning. From its historical rediscovery to its codification in planning, the *Kleinhaus* became a powerful nationalistic tool to reinscribe traditional values of the family and community into the fabric of modern urban society.



Figure 1. Residential lane off Glockengießerstraße 41–3, Lübeck, constructed in 1612. Source: “Gandorps Gang – Hof” [Gandorps Gang – Courtyard] (1925), © Bildarchiv Foto Marburg.

2. Discovering *Heimat*

Late 19th-century German architectural culture can largely be characterized by the growth of national self-consciousness and a widespread desire to rediscover historical building and applied arts traditions. From the work of amateur photographers to anthropologists, efforts to document and codify national dwelling styles were widespread and engaged diverse layers of the population. In these efforts, Germany was certainly not alone. Amongst the nations of Central Europe keen to shed the influence of French academicism, the discovery of

national folkloric artifacts, such as simple houses and their material contents, proved to be a widespread phenomenon in the larger global process of nation-building (Baycroft & Hopkin, 2012). In Germany, the localism movement was encapsulated in the pervasive term “*Heimat*” (homeland). While the term still largely holds connotations of nostalgia and mourning over the loss of cultural tradition, historians have nonetheless shown it to be an ideologically multivalent phenomenon that helped German citizens construct a national identity based on cultural pluralism and regional heterogeneity (Applegate, 1990). The *Heimat* movement left its most tangible mark on literature, painting, music, and indeed architecture, but its influence in German society ran much deeper, shaping debates ranging from environmental protection to the design of school curriculum (Blackbourn & Retallack, 2007; Jenkins, 2003; Rollins, 1997).

In the sphere of architectural history, a growing body of literature has established the pervasiveness of localist thinking amongst modern German architects and urbanists (Jerram, 2007; Lampugnani & Schneider, 1992; Rousset, in press; Umbach, 2009). From “national romanticism” to “architectural nationalism” to “vernacular modernism,” present architectural historiography offers a wealth of conceptualizations that have generated nuanced perspectives on German society’s hunger for tradition in the late 19th century and beyond (Miller-Lane, 2000; Schwarzer, 2016; Umbach & Hüppauf, 2005). However, the influence of *Heimat* in the spheres of housing and urban planning is less understood—perhaps because the term “mass housing” is habitually taken in architecture to mean houses that aesthetically express a modernizing process of social abstraction that devours traditional social order and the possibility of placeness. Yet, when the professional discipline of planning (*Städtebau*) was born in Germany in the early 20th century, it was, from the beginning, deeply committed to the study of traditional local social housing models that could act as design prompts for new urban developments.

Photography quickly became the favored tool for documenting local architecture amongst amateur *Heimat* enthusiasts and heritage professionals alike (Joschke & Brown, 2012). Beginning in the 1880s with the founding of the field of “house research” (*Hausforschung*), books on pre-modern northern European dwelling cultures were rife but were largely limited to reproducing diagrams, drawings, and old artworks depicting traditional dwellings (see, e.g., Essenwein, 1892; Stiehl, 1908). Architectural photography was already well established in Europe, especially in France and England via programs to document national monuments, especially churches (Ackerman, 2002). The increased use of the magic lantern projector in educational departments in art history across Europe and the United States at the end of the 19th century created wide markets for photographic slides depicting works of art and architecture. A student of art historian Herman Grimm (among

the first to integrate slides into art history lectures), the photographer and art historian Franz Stoedtner amassed a huge collection of photographic slides from his travels around Germany. In 1895, he established the Institute for the Science of Projection Photography (Institut für wissenschaftliche Projektionsphotographie), an agency specializing in art and architecture slides for reproduction in lectures and publications (the collection now forms the core of the Bildarchiv Foto Marburg; Buchkremer, 2013, pp. 386–387).

One of Stoedtner’s most popular collections dealt exclusively with the new field of urban design (*Städtebaukunst*). This collection included around 800 photographs of old urban maps, artistic panoramas, and original photographs of historic city streets. Where the Austrian art teacher Camillo Sitte traveled to Italy to hand-sketch piazzas from watchtowers in order to write his famed handbook on city planning (Lampugnani, 2009, p. 26; Sitte, 1889), with the help of Stoedtner’s and other similar collections, books on urban design history could be written at a rapid pace. This new genre of documentary photography turned old German cities into sites of important lessons for young architects. Notions of authenticity and *genius loci* in architecture were hitherto typically attached to rural farmhouses that spoke to what was perceived to be the heart of the nation—the peasantry (Redensek, 2017). The growth of an urban design photographic archive cultivated new interest in buildings that captured the activities of a thriving class of urban merchants and craftsmen who forged Germany’s path into the early modern world.

The simultaneous invention of halftone printing in the 1890s allowed photographs to be printed cheaply and effectively alongside text, and a market quickly emerged for photographic books on local urban building traditions. The two best-known books were undeniably architect and conservative ideologue

Paul Schultze-Naumburg’s volume *Kulturarbeiten: Der Städtebau* [Cultural Works: City Planning] (1906) and architect Paul Mebes’s (1908) *Um 1800* [Around 1800]. Both collections celebrated the modest, matter-of-fact style of middle-class domestic architecture that characterized early 19-century German cities. The three-volume *Die schöne deutsche Stadt* [Beautiful German Cities] (Baum, 1912; Wolf, 1911, 1913) utilized a wealth of materials amassed from slide agencies, heritage protection enthusiasts, and amateur photographers to offer a wide-ranging survey of simple domestic building traditions dating back to the Middle Ages. The goal of these and similar volumes was to extend popular appreciation for *Heimat*, but also to train the architect’s eye in identifying classic Sittean urban design principles, including picturesque grouping and enclosed intimate streets. These books were not intended to be encyclopaedic or especially historically rigorous. Their textual contents offered little in the way of art-historical precision, typically eschewing details like construction dates, builder names, styles, and building types. They were principally designed for readers to immerse themselves in the images and intuit from them a modern spirit of objectivity.

A handful of old philanthropic residential complexes emerged in photographic urban design literature as exemplary models for new housing construction. At the onset of the early modern world, philanthropic housing arose in response to the growing financial wealth of patricians in German trading cities, whose religious sense of obligation drove them to establish foundations to serve the lower stratum of urban society (Tietz-Strödel, 1982, pp. 6–26). Popular in the Hanseatic cities of Hamburg, Bremen, and Lübeck were “dwelling corridors” (*Wohngänge*), that could be found tucked away in narrow block interiors (Figure 2; Kohlmorgen, 1982). They typically housed widows of merchants and boatsmen

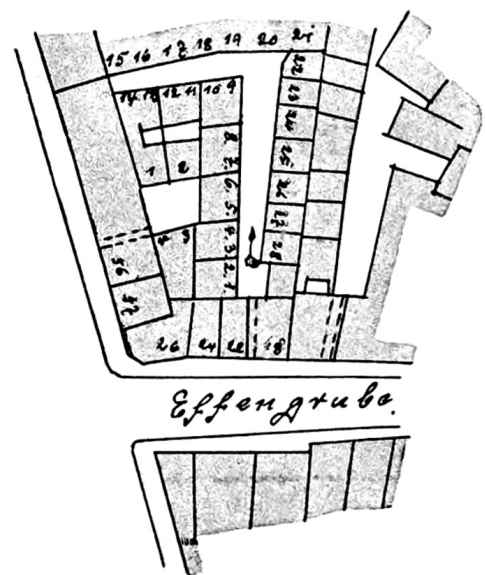


Figure 2. Photograph and plan of Blohmsgang dwelling corridor in Lübeck. Source: Harms (1907, plate 86).

and were named in honor of their wealthy donors. Lübeck boasted the best-preserved dwelling corridors (Bruns, 1920, pp. 38–40), including Glandorps Hof (1612) and Füchtings Hof (1649).

Modern critics considered these dwelling corridors to be exemplary works of socially-relevant urban design: They were suitably economical to reflect the modest means of their occupants, but likewise picturesque and cozy in their interiority and subtle positioning off the busy traffic road (Behrendt, 1916, pp. 216–220; Wolf, 1913). Built ad-hoc as infill in the block interior, these spaces might not appear to differ much from the notorious tenement block courtyards that characterized densely populated cities like Berlin. But in the eyes of reformers, philanthropic dwelling corridors were more than mere empty voids. Lined with flower beds and sitting benches where neighbors could gossip, they were imbued with rhythm and character. A personal ground-level entry into each two-story house offered a humane scale and individualizing element for residents, while the houses' positioning in united rows gave the complex a transpersonal feeling, avoiding the bourgeois tendency for individual aggrandizement through elaborate ornamental features. As one critic noted in reference to Füchtings Hof, the dwelling corridor felt like a city within a city, forming a "little realm of its own" (Bruns, 1920, p. 38).

Images of other notable housing complexes in Ulm and Nuremberg built to accommodate single families were also circulated via Stoedtner's collection, further capturing the aesthetic of the socially-informed row house type. Built in 1488 to accommodate the families of Swabian fustian weavers brought in to bolster the city's textile trade (Schnelbögl, 1961), the Nuremberg housing complex aptly named "Seven Rows" (*Sieben Zeilen*; Figure 3) featured rows of three small two-story dwellings with entries located on quieter lanes off the main streets, which could serve as play areas for chil-

dren. It is not difficult to speculate on what modern observers might have been expected to learn through Seven Rows: While suitably integrated into the existing cityscape, they appear distinctly ready-made, offering a glimpse of what contextually-sensitive standardized and rationalized modern housing might look like. A 1620 project in Ulm that provided housing for families of the city's militia was also significant (Figure 4). This project absorbed many of the tactics of Lübeck's ad-hoc corridors in a more systematized and standardized fashion, integrating the principle of the quiet residential street into an entire housing quarter, in effect developing the modern notion of the residential community or "neighborhood unit." The architecture follows a familiar formula, with the austerity of the plain-coated exterior offset by generously pitched roofs that assert a distinctly domestic feeling.

The Fuggerei housing complex in Augsburg garnered the most attention in urban design literature (Figure 5; Baum, 1912, p. 113; Schultze-Naumburg, 1906, p. 62). Established in 1516 by the notable Fugger banking family and carried out by the master-builder Thomas Krebs, it provided cheap rental accommodation for the city's poor craftsmen and their families. Containing 52 single-family dwellings, the residential complex brought together many notable principles that account for its positive reception amongst early 20th-century planners (Tietz-Strödel, 1982, p. 48). The layout of its free-standing rows conveyed a modern attitude of good economy, modest means, and mass standardization, while two gated entries (locked every evening) gave the complex a closed-off and communal spirit. More innovatively, it accommodated back gardens for each house, ensuring privacy and a degree of self-sufficiency for every family. Its dwelling plans were also highly rationalized. Local Augsburg historian Joseph Weidenbacher identified three main types of dwellings in the Fuggerei, ranging from dwellings with a kitchen and two rooms to



Figure 3. Left: Photograph of Nuremberg's Seven Rows. Right: Map highlighting the Seven Rows. Sources: "Sieben Zeilen" [Seven Rows] (1918, © Bildarchiv Foto Marburg) and Kuhn (1921, p. 102).



Figure 4. Left and center: Photographs of Ulm's militia housing quarter from the collection of Franz Stoedtner. Right: Map highlighting Ulm's militia housing on the border of the city wall. Sources: "Soldatenhäuser" [Soldiers' Housing] (1900, © Bildarchiv Foto Marburg) and Kuhn (1921, p. 105).

dwelling with a kitchen, chamber, and three rooms. Guided by the "innate benevolent spirit" and "working ethos" of the Fuggerei family, the economical rationale that underpinned the Fuggerei, for Weidenbacher (1918), made it an ideal model for new workers' housing.

The Fuggerei was also socially significant because it was the first philanthropic entity to be bound to an independent housing foundation rather than to an existing religious body (Adam, 2016, p. 3). Unlike the housing projects in Ulm or Nuremberg, it did not serve a particular civic institution or trade. While philanthropic housing across Europe in the early modern era typically served single people whose circumstances caused them to seek institutional aid (such as widows, nuns, or the sick) the Fuggerei purely served families by virtue of their work-

ing ethos and belonging to the city. As such, the housing complex was unique in operating as a preventative mechanism that symbolically placed the secular institution of the family at the heart of modern urban society.

3. Terming the *Kleinhaus*

The housing models cited above reflected values that ran contrary to established planning practice in Germany. Since the publication of German planner Josef Stübben's canonical handbook *Der Städtebau* [City Planning] in 1890, the field of planning expressed little concern for housing design, remaining devoted to issues of street traffic and hygiene. In imitation of Haussmann's Paris, Stübben promoted a schematic Baroque aesthetic as a



Figure 5. Left: Photograph depicting a street in the Fuggerei. Right: Map highlighting the plan of the Fuggerei. Sources: Aufsberg (1939, © Bildarchiv Foto Marburg/Lala Aufsberg) and Kuhn (1921, p. 105).

template for urban renewal in Germany, which *Heimat*-inspired urbanists described disparagingly as a “cult of the street.” The image of Paris as an emblem of cultural modernity would soon be challenged by the increasing influence of the English garden city movement in Germany, which brought housing to the center of debate. Planners Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker’s urban designs for the garden suburbs of Letchworth and Hampstead, which incorporated low-density, low-rise small houses inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement, were praised by German architects like Hermann Muthesius for their sensitivity to context and local tradition (Eberstadt, 1909a; Muthesius, 1904–5/1979).

If critics like Muthesius praised the typological clarity of the “English house” and proposed it as an ideal suburban vernacular, a comparable “German house” still awaited discovery (Stalder, 2008). Founded in 1903 by German architect Theodor Goecke and Sitte (who died before the first issue’s release), the journal *Der Städtebau* became a vital organ for reporting on English developments, provoking debate about how international garden city ideals could adapt to local conditions. In a message to their readers in the journal’s inaugural issue, Goecke and Sitte declared that, amongst other tasks such as regulating traffic, providing healthy and comfortable dwellings, and accommodating industry, a chief goal of the nascent field of urban planning was to nurture a “true love of *Heimat*” (1904, p. 1).

While not one to wax lyrical about the beauty of his native town (the city of Worms), the economist Rudolf Eberstadt became a central figure in promoting a localist ethic in city planning circles, whilst recognizing the need to systematize knowledge of house forms in ways practicable for planning authorities. Eberstadt’s influential *Handbuch des Wohnungswesens und der Wohnungsfrage* [Handbook for Housing and the Housing Question] (1909b) proved critical in giving terminological precision to housing forms at the intersection of architectural and planning cultures. Prior to the handbook’s publication, there existed no term in the German language that could be considered akin to the now-prevalent English term “housing,” used to describe a relatively autonomous field of knowledge. The term *Wohnung* (dwelling) was most frequently used in political, statistical, and social-scientific fields to describe the household unit. The emergence of the *Wohnungsfrage* (literally the “dwellings question”) in the late 19th century was largely limited to the arena of political debate between bourgeois reformists over how best to balance economical demands with concerns to improve the moral lives of the lower classes (Bernhardt, 1998; Bullock & Read, 1985; Kastorff-Viehmann, 1979).

Eberstadt offered a progressive voice on the housing question, sympathizing with the working classes and emphasizing the need for comprehensive planning to curb private speculation. At the same time, he betrayed a more typical bourgeois conservatism in his willingness to draw sharp lines between the normal and the patho-

logical to explain housing conditions. In the introduction, he explained that:

The science of dwelling circumstances has, like medicine, its physiology and its pathology; it is an investigation of normal and abnormal conditions; it must recognize and acknowledge both. The investigation of the general normal conditions is the job of housing [*Wohnungswesen*, literally “the business of dwelling”]; the understanding and explanation of individual anomalous, unsatisfactory, sick conditions is the area of the housing question [*Wohnungsfrage*]....The housing question and housing have thus the same external area in common, but their methods and goals are different. The science of housing has, as I would like to define here, the goal of realizing the best conditions for the production, use, and assessment of human dwelling. (Eberstadt, 1910, pp. 1–2)

In his efforts to establish housing as a rigorous science, Eberstadt developed a typo-morphological approach that would become a mainstay in urban design research, providing urban street, block, and dwelling typologies that could standardize communication across the architectural and planning fields (Albrecht & Zurfluh, 2019; Claessens, 2004). Historical research formed a crucial part of this approach. In the first section of the *Handbook*, Eberstadt traced the evolution of small housing construction back to Antiquity. His cultural frame of reference was narrow, idealizing the archetypal two-story, three-window house that served rapidly growing urban communities across the Germanic lands from the 12th century onwards, which he termed the *Kleinhaus* (although none from this century survived).

While this term was hitherto occasionally (and ambiguously) used in late 19th-century housing literature simply to describe a small dwelling detached on all sides, analogous to the English “cottage,” in Eberstadt’s hands, it came to be infused with a sense of stylistic clarity, aesthetic purpose, and national historical fate. Emphasizing close ties between this simple, schematic house type and the socio-economic context of homeownership and urban belonging, the economist went as far as to suggest that its introduction was of “far-reaching importance” to the political and economic development of the middle-classes during the Middle Ages (Eberstadt, 1910, p. 41).

In another sub-section on the “Artistic consideration of house forms,” Eberstadt reproduced the *Kleinhaus* model copiously in photographs of a handful of still-surviving pre-modern philanthropic complexes, including Augsburg’s Fuggerei, Lübeck’s dwelling corridors, and Ulm’s militia housing—models which he held to be ideal (Eberstadt, 1910, pp. 204–211). As cities of declining economic importance and increasing touristic value in the 19th century, the sense of longing for *Heimat* is palpable in their visual presence in the *Handbook*. At the same

time, they betray a somewhat patronizing gaze on the modest lifestyles of the traditional underclasses. Many of the houses reproduced in the *Handbook* appeared derelict, bearing significant resemblance to the back-to-back terraces that were simultaneously being condemned in England for their poor ventilation. Hygienic concerns aside, for Eberstadt these models told a story of historical continuity and gradual organizational perfection according to the distinct social requirements of the hard-working family. As such, they reflected more than poor housing—they encapsulated a reformist impulse that was authentically middle-class in its aspirations to eschew outward ostentation and strive for autonomy, familial comfort, and privacy.

As a house form that could be detached, duplex, or terraced, the *Kleinhaus* as an ideal “normal” dwelling challenged the established hierarchy of values in the housing debate that positioned the economic value of the high-density tenement model against the moral and hygienic value of the low-density cottage model. Defining the healthy dwelling became less a matter of density and more a matter of historical authenticity and conventionalism. Typo-morphological correctness according to historical precedent would naturally bring all external factors shaping the healthy dwelling into equilibrium. The architectural merit of a house was defined by its capacity to render its social content legible. Tenement buildings, Eberstadt argued, were not capable of developing their own artistic sensibility. They could be covered with columns and caryatids and “still appear much uglier because they appear more untrue. The dwelling house must express its purpose, to belong to the person, to offer him freedom, security and possession, and only where these conditions are fulfilled

can the external form become artistically well designed” (Eberstadt, 1910, p. 257). To illustrate his point, Eberstadt reproduced an image of a typical tenement building beside a complex of *Kleinhäuser* (Figure 6). The differences for readers of the *Handbook* were intended to be stark: On the left stood a façade shielding an indiscriminate mass of living space; on the right stood houses that demonstrated full correspondence between social content and exterior form.

After Eberstadt’s *Handbook*, images of rustic pitched roofs and picturesque streets went from being scattered fragments appreciated strictly by *Heimat* enthusiasts to concrete strategies in the urban planner’s toolbox. Underlying the pragmatism of this endeavor lay a deeper impulse to fashion myths about the long-durée of modern social housing—a history structured by the secularization of the philanthropic institution and the rise of global trade cities in the early modern world. By privileging the *Kleinhaus* as the standard for “normal” modern housing conditions, the *Handbook* placed the historical autonomy of the traditional urban middle-classes at the center of an urban design agenda in Germany, whilst making this house form operative in responding to the logic of future metropolitan growth. In contrast to the planning of the tenement city as a veritable Potemkin village, modern urban planning became a matter of grasping how the “big city” (*Großstadt*) as an organism interacted with the *Kleinhaus* as its most basic cell.

4. Fabricating the *Kleinhaus*

In the decade following the publication of the *Handbook*, the term *Kleinhaus* became ubiquitous in architectural and planning discourse. As the closest thing to a national



Figure 6. Comparison of an apartment complex and a row of *Kleinhäuser*. Source: Eberstadt (1910, p. 259).

type, it came to express the same level of stylistic clarity and sense of middle-class virtue as the “English house” (Breuer, 1914; Former, 1912; Muthesius, 1918). Much like the English house, the problem posed by the *Kleinhaus* was that of finding a balance between monotonous standardization and the saccharine picturesqueness of typical *Heimat* art. In his post-war handbook *Kleinhaus und Kleinsiedlung* [Kleinhaus and Small Settlement], Muthesius (1918, p. 227) argued that the *Kleinhaus*, as an organically evolved object, “recalls the perfection that our machines, weapons, and airplanes experience through continued progress in manufacture.” He assured his readers that the monotony created out of its progressive standardization—from its window frames to its floor plan—would necessarily be tempered when adapted to local (*örtlich*) idiom, and would thus never be boring (1918, p. 224–231).

Muthesius singled out a few large housing projects, including the garden cities of Hellerau and Staaken, as chief representatives of modern *Kleinhaus* construction. These garden cities successfully evoked the romantic image of the small town in their architectural conventions (albeit largely perverting traditional examples through their weakened social connections to the city). Founded in 1908 and financially aided by the Hellerau Building Cooperative, the Hellerau garden city, just outside of Dresden, provided cheap rent or homeownership to the working and lower-middle classes. Likely for the purposes of cost and heating insulation, nearly all construction in Hellerau consisted of low-rise row houses. Architect Heinrich Tessenow produced the most infamous designs in his contribution to Hellerau, stripping the *Kleinhaus* back to its essential elements as a lesson

in middle-class self-restraint (Ekici, 2013). Other contributions by notable architects Georg Metzendorf, Richard Riemerschmid, Muthesius, and Kurt Frick emphasized the more local traditionalistic elements of the *Kleinhaus* model (Figure 7), incorporating eyelid dormers and rustic roof shingles and shutters.

While the balance between asceticism and romanticism proved delicate amongst the architects involved, all of the houses in Hellerau encapsulated the social ethos underpinning the historical *Kleinhaus* model in their commitment to achieving a rationalism and conciseness in floor plan. All emanated an enclosed and complete familial existence between their four walls. Muthesius’s floor plans demonstrated a rationalized coordination of rooms according to the needs of the family, recalling the typification processes that guided the design of the Fuggerei. These plans featured all the conventional elements of family living, including the scullery, water closet, kitchen-cum-living room (*Wohnküche*), a separate living room on the ground floor, and the parents’ bedroom and separate children’s bedrooms according to gender on the upper floor (Figure 8). The private gardens attached to Muthesius’s dwellings were also distinctly no-fuss and practical, containing stables for livestock.

Constructed by the Imperial Office of the Interior (*Reichsamt des Innern*) to house local factory workers in munition production, the Staaken colony near Spandau, Berlin (1914–1917) by architect Paul Schmitthenner was an ambitious experiment in floor plan standardization (right down to its door handles; Oppenheimer, 1917, p. 8). It featured just five variations in plan across 800 dwellings, all of which were modest in size but featured a generous kitchen-cum-living room as the central



Figure 7. Photograph of Riemerschmid’s housing group on the street “Am grünen Zipfel.” Source: Breuer (1911, p. 458).

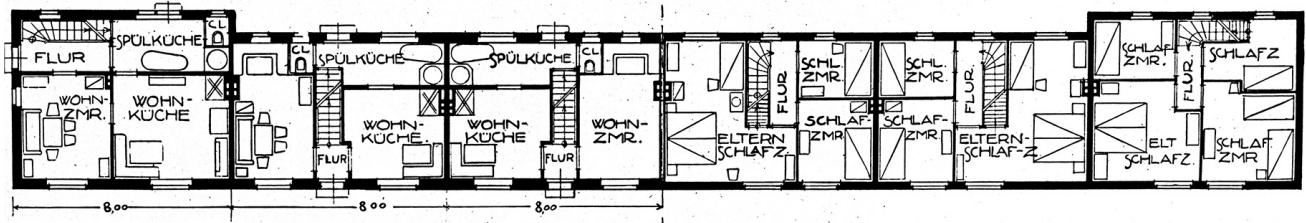


Figure 8. Muthesius' floor plans for a housing group in Hellerau, 1909. From the collection of Franz Stodtner. Source: "Grundriß der Häusergruppe "Beim Gräbchen" in Hellerau" [Plan of a housing group "Beim Gräbchen" in Hellerau] (1909), © Bildarchiv Foto Marburg.

family hearth and a private yard big enough for live-stock (Voigt, 2012, p. 18). Schmitthenner's various façade designs cited traditional decorative features of northern German old towns, from a Dutch gabled Baroque style to a more restrained classicism (Figure 9). Far from turning the colony into a pastiche of historical quotation, the overriding pragmatic demands of the *Kleinhaus* as a basic socio-aesthetic model kept them homey but restrained. Equally significant was the incorporation of artistic urban design principles, such as gates that enclosed streets and reasserted an interior-like character—in effect relocating Sittean principles from the church and square to the residential community as the new locus of civic life.



Figure 9. Schmitthenner's housing on the street "Zwischen den Giebeln" in the Staaken garden city, Spandau, Berlin. Source: Vorsteher (1978), © Bildarchiv Foto Marburg/Dieter Vorsteher.

For conservative critics, Staaken successfully captured the civic spirit of the traditional Brandenburg village without feeling imitative (Schmitz, 1919; Stahl, 1917).

Further west, architect Hugo Wagner's designs for workers' housing near Bremen (Maraun, 1995) were similarly praised by architectural critics for incorporating a rustic local idiom whilst reflecting a modernist sensibility through their commitment to decorative restraint and uniformity. Wagner was a vocal promoter of the movement for *Heimat* protection (*Heimatschutz*) in Bremen, and traditionalist critics positioned his work within an organic lineage of authentic northern German *Kleinhaus* construction (Eberstadt, 1910, pp. 254–255; Högg, 1909; Seeßelberg & Lindner, 1909). His private projects, which included cheap and rustic duplex housing in the workers' colonies of Einswarden (1908) and Burg-Grambke (1910; Figure 10), might have easily been mistaken for surviving remnants of an early housing foundation project. The strictness of their uniform façades was offset by alternations of densities and gable configurations that gave rhythm and variety to the streetscape. Wagner's standardized floor plan designs played an equally reformist role in providing a generous kitchen-cum-living room to serve as a family hearth (Figure 11). Family-oriented reformists praised the adjoined ventilated stove and sink area, which maintained health standards whilst enabling the housewife to sufficiently oversee household activity (Kelm, 1911, p. 142).

While all of these modern emulations of the *Kleinhaus* interpreted the model differently according to local tradition, what united them was a shared commitment to standardize the floor plan based on what they perceived to be the glue holding urban society together: the family hearth. In his praise of new suburban developments including Hellerau and Staaken, critic Walter Curt Behrendt maintained that the "kitchen forms the real center of family traffic in the *Kleinhaus*. Here the housewife controls, the children play, the meals are taken, the family is brought together around the 'domestic hearth' during the free hours of the evening, like the times of the old German middle-class houses [*Bürgerhauses*]" (1916, p. 208). In its ability to mold the worker into an upright citizen, Behrendt (1916, p. 228) argued that the suburban *Kleinhaus*, with its hearth and vegetable patch, "creates a bond that binds the population to the soil of the fatherland once more."



Figure 10. Wagner’s housing for workers in Burg-Grambke, Bremen, 1910. From the collection of Franz Stoedtner. Source: “Arbeiterkolonie” [Workers’ Colony] (n.d.), © Bildarchiv Foto Marburg.

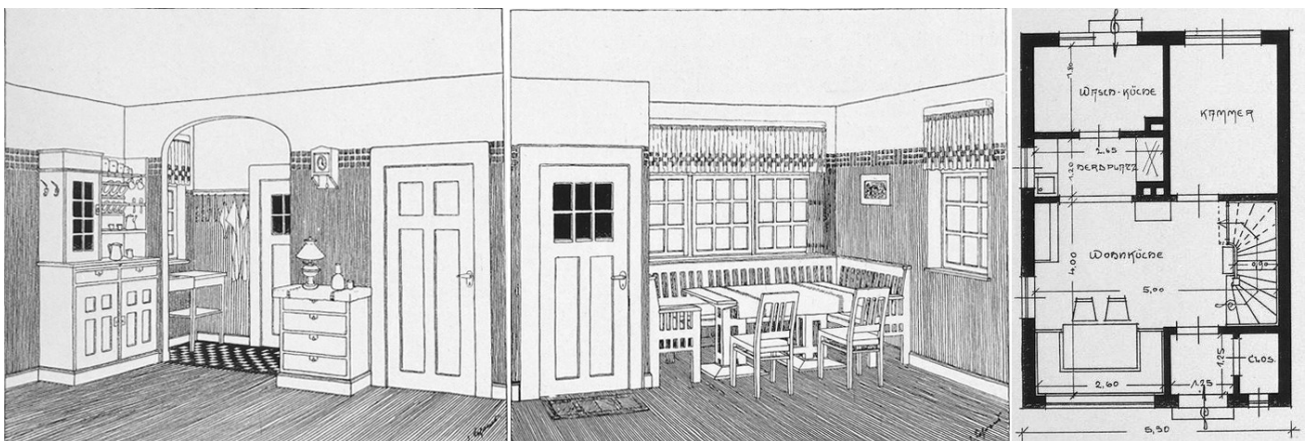


Figure 11. Wagner, Lotz, and Schacht’s designs for the workers’ colony of Einswarden, Bremen. Left and center illustrates the kitchen-cum-living room and right illustrates the floor plan. Source: Seeßelberg and Lindner (1909, p. 45).

5. Conclusion

While this house model lost much of its cultural import in the 1920s as new terms like the “minimum dwelling” (*Existenzminimum*) gained momentum in modernist circles and sidelined traditionalist positions, it continued to serve as an aspirational object for the nation’s lower middle-classes and remained the dominant house type in Germany well into the 1960s (Lorbek, 2018). By examining the emergence of the *Kleinhaus* in professional and popular discourse, this article has sought to demonstrate that, in Germany at least, efforts to clarify housing terminology around singular ideals were closely tied to the process of nation-building. In its ability to mobilize national historical myths about civic responsibility and local belonging, the *Kleinhaus* remained a central part of early 20th-century efforts to address Germany’s hous-

ing shortage (Muthesius, 1918; Wolf, 1919). Its historical rediscovery, codification, and fabrication involved energetic cross-disciplinary dialogue between the fields of art history, architecture, and planning. It was a dialogue that reflected, foremost, cultural anxieties over carving a place for the local out of an increasingly homogenous template of European modernity.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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