THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL HOUSING

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Introduction — housing in the 1990s
In a recently published study of housing in the EC countries, Roger Quilliot, the French socialist former Minister of Housing, refers to the high level of poverty and housing need in Europe (Ghekiere, 1991). Fifty million of the EC's 337 million population are poor and mainly badly housed and between 3 and 5 million actually homeless. Clearly, recent years have seen the re-emergence of a major shortage of affordable housing. In many countries, some housing issues are again appearing in the political agenda. Concerns include the social, political and racial turmoil which surrounds some peripheral grands ensembles in France, the crisis of mortgage foreclosures and repossessions in the UK, the racially tinged conflict over access to and ownership of housing in reunified Germany and, most common of all perhaps, the rising tide of homelessness.

And yet, in the 1970s, after thirty years of heavily subsidised large scale building activity, the belief was common that the long struggle to provide decent and affordable housing for the majority of citizens had been finally won. True, limited and localised problems remained, 'special needs'

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groups still had to be catered for. But in many countries these years seemed to herald the emergence of what George Sternlieb called the 'post-shelter' society—housing economies and polities firmly focused on the expansion of home ownership and driven by financial concerns; profits for housing producers and financiers and capital gains for housing consumers—rather than by housing needs.

The reasons for the collapse of this scenario in the last decade or so are complex. A key factor is the economic transition, as some describe it from a fordist to a post-fordist system, the collapse of old industries and the rise, frequently albeit on shaky foundations, of new consumer and financial services sectors. These changes polarized income distributions, with more highly paid and low paid jobs and fewer middle incomes. In addition, the ending of full employment has created new poverty stratum, which some label the underclass. Demographic and social changes, such as aging populations, increased marriage breakdown and single parenthood, have also swelled the numbers of the poor. Political turmoil has added to the low income housing demand, as remarkably high numbers of migrants, from the ex-socialist countries and further afield, have entered the housing markets of western Europe. Finally, there are developments in the financial system, deregulation and the shift from an era of low to one of high real interest rates, which have destabilised private housing markets.

In some ways the contemporary situation is similar to that which existed in much of western Europe after 1945, certainly with respect to poverty and migration, although a very important difference then was the relatively unpolarised distributions of housing needs. In 1945 the housing shortage was widespread, affecting an extensive spectrum of income and socio-economic groupings. Now the main burden of housing deprivation is
concentrated among a more limited if growing population, those who are outside the labour market or who are in low paid and/or insecure employment.

After 1945, despite the fragility of their economies, low levels of production and income and severe constraints on public expenditure, most governments placed a high priority on the expansion of house building. Subsidies for social and private rented construction, and in some cases for home ownership, were virtually universal ¹ Although the balance of assistance to each of these sectors and means by which it was provided varied considerably, mass programs of social rented housing normally played a central role. Indeed, the lack of functioning private housing markets and low levels of disposable incomes meant that social rented housing became the key element in the national housing policies of left, centre and right wing parties.

In 1992, in societies which, whatever their current difficulties, are far richer than they were in 1945, there are no signs of a similar concerted response to the new housing crisis. While individual governments make limited responses to the housing crisis, for example the recent German decision to provide a new shallow subsidy for a form of temporary social housing to meet the growing housing shortage among middle income groups in that country's big cities, and a failed recent attempt by the British government to stem mortgage repossessions, the survey of EC

¹ The term 'social rented housing', let alone 'social housing', has a variety of meanings. But social rented housing can be very broadly characterised as having three major characteristics. First, it is provided by landlords at a price which is not primarily determined by considerations of profit. Second, it is administratively allocated according to some conception of 'need'. Third, government control over social rented housing is extensive and has become more so over time.
housing policies mentioned above concludes that the last decade has seen a convergence in national housing policies around a model which is inadequate as a response to the growth of mass low income housing needs.

The three main elements in this model are: first, an attempt to disengage the state from housing, or more accurately a redefinition of the respective roles of state and market; second, reduced support for housing investment, targeting the remaining state support on the poor through means tested consumption subsidies; third, the continued promotion of home ownership, with high levels of mainly indirect, regressive tax subsidies.

The defects of this model, as a means of meeting moderate and low income housing needs, are legion. Perhaps it is not necessary to rehearse them here, as the growth of unmet housing needs in the 1990s indicates their lack of effectiveness. Rather the question to be pursued here is why the option of a social rented housing led model, as it was conceived in earlier years or in a new version, is an unlikely prospect.

First however, it is important clarify what is being asserted when one refers to a private market led model of housing policy and the dim prospects for a social rented housing led alternative. As Murie and Lindberg have observed, in a paper which refers to the ending of the post-war golden age of social rented housing, the declining fortunes of this housing are more advanced in some countries than others (Murie and Lindberg, 1991). It seems unlikely, for example, that the large scale privatisation of social rented housing occurring in Britain and Germany will be repeated, whatever some politicians might desire, in the Netherlands, Denmark, France or Sweden. In some cases national social
rented housing stocks may become, like public housing in the USA, a residual sector housing economically, politically and socially marginalised populations. In other cases there is more likely to be an internal division between residualised projects and those which continue to accommodate a more mixed population. So the prospect is not for a uniform, pristine private sector led system of housing provision and the reduction of all social rented housing to US style welfare housing, but a less well defined but clearly evident and varyingly constituted tendency in many national housing systems towards privatisation, higher rents, subject subsidies, lower investment and a wish to rely on the private market to supply mainstream housing needs.

The immediate reasons why a social housing led approach has little appeal to so many governments and political parties are well known. The advancing disintegration, from the mid-1970s, of the economic, political and ideological systems which sustained the post-war welfare states, has put pressure on the public resources for social rented housing, weakened the political support for it and strengthened the position of those who oppose a collectively owned, semi-socialised service. The historical origins of such hostility lie in the golden years of liberal capitalism before 1914 when social housing first emerged (Harloe, 1990). For thirty years after 1945 this viewpoint was largely ignored. However it was never eliminated.

The re-emergence of such views has been aided by the many management, design and physical problems which now exist, notably among the large

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2 These national variations are explored in detail in my forthcoming book on social rented housing in Europe and the USA, on which this paper is based.
scale frequently high-rise, industrialised social rented housing projects of
the sixties and early seventies. Rhetorical claims concerning choice and
self-determination in private housing have been aided by well publicised
examples of bureaucracy, inefficiency and degradation in some social
rented housing.

Explaining the changing fortunes of social rented housing
For an earlier generation of social policy analysts, these immediate factors
—a lack of popular and political will to expand social rented housing in
response to growing lower income housing needs and public expenditure
constraints—might have seemed explanation enough. However, the
history of social rented housing shows that there has been no automatic
correspondence between, for example, ideological hostility to such housing
or constrained public finances, on the one hand, and a failure to support its
expansion in practice, on the other hand. In the early 1920s and after
1945, non-socialist centre and right wing parties supported mass social
housing when national finances were highly constrained. So we need to
explain why such a situation is not now likely to recur.

A useful starting point is to abandon the belief, implicit in many housing
studies in the golden age of the post war welfare state, that provision of
social rented housing has been determined, above all, by a recognition of
the existence of unmet low and moderate income housing needs. Instead,
it is useful to regard this as no more, at best, than a necessary but not a
sufficient condition and ask why and under what circumstances has the
existence of unmet housing needs led to this particular response in

3 For a critique of such approaches see Harloe and Martens, 1984.
capitalist societies. In fact, historical studies seem to indicate that in many such societies the normal wish is to set severe limits on the decommodification or socialisation of housing, more so than in the case of some other elements of social provision such as income maintenance, education or perhaps health services. Here we will not explore why this is so, however, one factor may be the failure of most social democratic parties to promote radically decommodified, non-bureaucratised forms of socialised housing. More important, perhaps, is the strategic importance of private land, property ownership and finance capital in these societies, the deeply embedded interests which benefit from this situation and which defend it in depth. While major capitalist interests are involved in other areas of social need, historically they have been less powerful, entrenched and central to the capitalist economy as a whole. In this respect the agents of provision active in housing and the built environment more generally may be comparable with those involved in the other main arena of basic provision for human needs where private land and property ownership is of central importance, namely food production.

Here the purpose in analyzing the circumstances in which mass programs of social rented housing emerge is to obtain indications of the circumstances in which these programs do not emerge, in other words an explanation of why the new housing needs of the 1990s have not, as yet, and are unlikely in the foreseeable future, to provoke a significant reversal in the declining fortunes of social rented housing.

Detailed work on the history of social rented housing in Britain, West Germany, the Netherlands, France, Denmark, and the USA, suggests that there have been two, or perhaps two and a half golden ages of social
housing. The first period was brief, lasting from the end of the First World War to the mid-1920s in most cases. The second period, as Lindberg and Murie indicate, the real golden age of social rented housing, lasted from the late 1940s to the mid 1970s. Between these periods there was what might be called a half golden age, because the growth of this housing was far more variable, the depression years of the 1930s.

Common to these periods was not just the existence of major housing needs, which the private market was patently unable to satisfy, but that these needs were of a wider social, economic and/or political importance in relation to the maintenance and reproduction of the social systems in which they occurred. In short, the rationale for the programs of mass social rented housing which occurred in these eras was to a very important degree 'externally' determined, that is determined by the role that social housing played in meeting these system needs.

Social housing between the world wars
Immediately after the First World War these needs were narrowly and unrealistically conceived by governments which took up and adapted pre-war ideas about social rented housing, and embryo social housing institutions, to fashion the first significant subsidised social housing programs. Most western capitalist governments aimed to return as soon as possible to 'business as usual', reinstating the apparently smoothly functioning private economies with minimal state intervention that existed up to 1914. The restoration of the icon of liberal economics, the gold standard, symbolised this objective. Most western nations had returned to a form of the gold standard by the mid to late 1920s, at which point it was believed 'business as usual' had indeed been restored.
The events of 1929–31 and the political and economic chaos that led to the Second World War put paid to this illusion. By then the first golden age of social housing was over. Enormous shortages of decent and affordable housing remained and the private housing market, which had been gravely afflicted by the war and its aftermath, was unable to replace state subsidised social rented housing in meeting these needs. However, the existence of unmet housing needs, and the discontent of the needy, no longer seemed (outside Germany at least) to pose a threat to social and political systems which had been in a fragile, and some thought terminal, state for the first five or so years after the war.

In short, social rented housing was no longer perceived as one means of restabilising society. Moreover, a key element in the return to 'business as usual' was a return to the private housing market. What made possible the transition, within a few years, from a situation of social conflict and tension to one of apparent stability, and thus to a situation where mass social rented housing programs could be terminated, were developments such as the widespread defeats of militant workers' and trades union movements in the early 1920s, divisions within the socialist bloc and so on.4 In fact the new social rented housing built in the years of turmoil mainly accommodated particular sub-sections of those who were in housing need after the war, skilled manual workers and the lower middle class, many of whom were engaged in the wave of worker and citizen militancy of these years, or who governments feared might become so engaged. In short, this housing was targeted on sections of the population

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4 For a detailed comparative account see Maier, 1975.
who were in housing need but who also had, temporarily, some political leverage.

Most pre–1914 housing reform movements, dominated by middle and upper class elites whose main objective was to defend the social order against socialism, were unwilling to concede more than a very limited role, at best, for state subsidised rental housing (see Harloe, 1990). Most reformers, bound to the tenets of liberal economics, were deeply opposed to state intervention in housing markets. Many saw home ownership, not rental housing as the best way of ensuring that loyalty to the existing social order was reinforced among the 'respectable' working class. Those who did allow for the possibility of some state subsidised rental housing also imbued it with a wider social purpose, not just as a means of accommodating but also of disciplining and resocialising those who were variously labelled as the 'undeserving poor', the 'residuum' or, in a phrase which reveals all, the 'dangerous classes'. This purpose was particularly clear when some state subsidised housing was seen as the only way to rehouse and control those who lived in the urban slums of the larger cities, and to reclaim these areas for middle and upper class residence, commerce and public purposes. Of course such slum dwellers could not possibly afford even tolerably decent private rental housing.

The proposals which linked social rented housing provision to slum clearance were not implemented in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. This was a model for a small scale program of residualist housing, focusing on those later labelled 'problem households'. In contrast, the post-war schemes for social rented housing construction were 'mass' programs, targeted on a relatively wide range of somewhat better
off groups. However, the pre-war concern for resocialising the working class was clearly still evident in post-war policies and plans (Magri and Topalov, 1987).

We can also identify in the early history of social rented housing a third model of provision which could be called the 'workers' cooperative' model. Before, during and after the First World War, workers grouped together to provide their own housing, through various forms of cooperative organisation. There were many links between these cooperatives and the trades unions and social democratic parties, notably in Germany and Denmark (and from the post-war period, in Sweden too). In some cases they formed part of a project to develop a distinctive set of working class social, economic and political institutions inside but apart from the dominant social order, a form of negative integration, as some historians describe it. Self-organisation and self-management, rather than state or other forms of bureaucratic control, that is forms of social and economic organisation which were implicitly or explicitly opposed to those of capitalism and the social housing conceptions of reforming elites, were what distinguished this model from the 'mass' model. The story of why these efforts failed, and why, in most cases, cooperative social housing became assimilated within the post-Second World War welfare states, is too complex to recount in this paper. However, it can be argued that this model could have provided the basis for the alternative to mass, bureaucratised welfare state style housing provision after 1945 which social democratic parties failed to deliver.

As the need for 'mass' social rented housing declined, in most countries from the mid-1920s, for the essentially non-housing reasons already
mentioned, the trickle of construction which continued was increasingly justified in terms of the residual model of provision. And, as evidence from countries such as Britain and the Netherlands, which adopted social rented housing programs linked to slum clearance in the 1930s, shows, there was increased emphasis on a management style which stressed the need to inspect, discipline, re-educate and control the potentially feckless tenants who were to live in this housing. In contrast, the 'mass' housing built in the 1920s, targeted at the respectable working and middle class, was frequently managed in a rather more commercial style akin to that in the private rented sector, although elements of perhaps rather more benevolently expressed tutelage remained.

In the depression years of the 1930s only a few countries reverted to a 'mass' rationale for social rented housing. The common feature in these cases, which included the USA for the first time, was the use of social rented housebuilding in a public works strategy aimed at relieving unemployment and stimulating the private economy. In Sweden these macro-economic concerns were linked to the social and political objectives of the social democrats who came to power in this decade, but who were unable to implement their plans until the war was over. Elsewhere, mass social rented housing was only contemplated when private market conditions made it incapable of contributing substantially to employment generation, and only then in countries where some state action over unemployment was a political necessity. Thus in Britain, where for various reasons the private housebuilding market boomed in the mid to late 1930s, new social rented housing, as noted above, was ever more closely restricted to a residual role, an adjunct to slum clearance and modernisation of the urban infrastructure. In America, the pressures
which led to public housing (a minor element in the New Deal social reforms) arose from the profound social crisis in the early 1930s and the persistence of high unemployment in later years.

This history suggests that two contrasting models of state initiated provision can be identified. First, the 'residual' model, targeted at the urban poor, with a rationale heavily influenced by the perceived problems of managing this group of the population, containing and perhaps solving the problems which it might pose for the wider society, and by the wish to facilitate the profitable reuse of inner city areas. The second, 'mass' model, involved essentially temporary larger scale programs of housing, targeted at the 'respectable' working class and sections of the growing white collar labour force, who might soon be catered for again by the private market, when there was a return to 'business as usual'. In the inter-war years the residual model began to be accepted as a necessary supplement to market forms of housing provision in some capitalist countries. The second form of provision, which entailed a more significant impact on the private rental market, only occurred under particular circumstances, when such provision contributed to the resolution or at least the management of crisis conditions. As these conditions faded the tendency was to revert to the residual form of social rented housing provision and leave the field free for the private sector.

Social housing in an age of modernisation and economic growth 1945–75

After 1945 the need for mass programs of social rented housing construction, on a scale far beyond that achieved previously, was accepted by governments of many political complexions in Europe. Unlike the
period after the First World War, this response was not just a short term reaction to acute social unrest, before a rapid return to business as usual in housing, as in the economy. Of course, the war intensified already acute shortages of housing and these were a major social and political issue prompting state intervention. However, now a powerful additional reason existed for state subsidised social rented housing construction—its contribution to economic modernisation and urbanisation. While such a role was prefigured in the 1930s, notably in the plans of the Swedish and other social democratic parties, it only became accepted by a wider spectrum of political forces, and implemented, post-war. Social housing investment also became one of the tools of Keynesian style demand management, being frequently used to help maintain the new commitment to full employment and non-inflationary economic growth.

Economic modernisation and growth, together with demographic changes, including the trend to smaller households, sustained major housing shortages and mass programs of social rented housing through the 1950s and 1960s. In the early years housing investment was tightly restricted, because of prioritised investment in industry, infrastructure and non-housing welfare state programs and because of the relatively low levels of domestic income available for spending on housing. However, the picture began to alter as economic modernisation and rapid growth resulted in rising private and public sector resources. In the 1960s state expenditure on social programs rose sharply and social housing output expanded as governments pledged to finally eliminate housing shortages. However, at the same time rising personal incomes made possible a major upsurge in private housing output.
Towards the end of the decade some shifts began to be apparent in the situation. There were increasing economic difficulties, as the post war 'economic miracle' led to endemic inflation and a saturation in effective demand. Growth rates began to fall. Also, as crude housing shortages were eliminated and the urban-industrial transition more or less completed, many governments again began to link social rented housing construction to modernisation of the urban system and thus to slum clearance, in some respects, therefore, reverting to the residualist model of social rented housing provision.

By the mid-1970s, home ownership was expanding rapidly, promoted and aided by governments of many political complexions. While large scale urban renewal continued, increasing emphasis was placed on the rehabilitation of private housing (and some older social housing) rather than clearance and replacement. Moreover, stagflation and the increasing resort to austerity policies with deep cuts in public expenditure, reduced the public resources available for social rented housing.

By now the politics of housing was being transformed. As home ownership came within reach of larger sections of the population, conservative and centrist parties rediscovered their preference for this tenure, reducing their support for social rented housing that had been engendered by conditions during the early post-war years. Social democratic parties had not achieved the transition from a private to a socialised housing system. In most cases this had not even been a serious objective, although Swedish policies seemed for many years to point in this direction. Economic growth and industrial restructuring changed the class structure, eroding the traditional electoral base for these parties. They
responded by broadening their appeal, moving from 'workers' to 'peoples' parties, accepting the main principles of the mixed economy of welfare capitalism. In country after country they dropped programs which included large scale state ownership of industry and socialist forms of economic planning, for example. Increasingly, what divided left and right wing parties was an argument over the extent to which the state should modify the distributive outcomes of the private market.

As they sought to attract votes from white collar workers, and as the better off among their working class electorate began to become home owners, social democrats, with varying degrees of commitment, embraced the conservative preference for home ownership. Again with some variation, the social democrats began to adopt a conception of social rented housing, which scarcely differed in any fundamental respect from that adopted by the nonsocialists, namely that its main rationale was to accommodate the limited sections of the population unable to be housed by the private market. The politics of social housing centred on arguments between left and right over matters such as the size of the construction program and the levels of subsidies and rents, leaving unquestioned the revival and growing dominance of the private market.

These politics of housing reflected a broader acceptance by social democracy of the boundaries between the state and the market (and the acceptable relations between the two) in the system of welfare capitalism which was established after 1945. Even before the policy shifts of the late 1960s and 1970s these limits were evident, as the degree of socialisation of housing production, which had always been severely restricted, declined, due for example, to the removal of land price controls, the revival of
private construction firms and increasing use of private finance. In some cases, notably Germany and France, the ownership of much of the social rented housing was also in commercial or petty capitalist hands as well.

Ironically, mass social rented housing programs had frequently benefited the private sector, sometimes at the expense of those who occupied it. It provided a useful, controllable instrument for state-led drives to modernise housing production, which favoured large scale construction firms. Developments such as high rise industrialised building did not occur in private housing markets, where consumers had some degree of choice, but social rented tenants had no choice except to accept whatever the producers, architects and planners, housing managers and politicians gave them. Although the high rise 'revolution' was a dreadful failure, many of the technical and organisational developments, together with the productivity gains through the use of standardisation, prefabrication and the substitution of unskilled for skilled labour, which it incorporated, were later transferred to low rise construction in the private sector. More generally, social rented housebuilding provided an important basis for the revival of the construction industry post-war and, at times when private orders declined, a means of sustaining activity and profit levels.

A feature of post-war social rented housing, accepted by many social democrats as by non-socialists, was large scale, professionalised and bureaucratic housing management. In most countries, those forms of cooperative housing which descended from the workers' movements became more or less assimilated within the policies and procedures of the bureaucratised welfare state (although Danish social rented housing remained notable for its high degree of management decentralisation and
tenant influence). In Germany, which had experienced the most ambitious example of the social democratic project (along with Vienna) in the first three decades of the century, the social democrats and trade unions consciously turned their backs after 1945 on any wider societal role for social rented housing as they sought to broaden their appeal and to incorporate new sections of the labour force in their electorate. While much post-war social rented housing adopted the cooperative form in this country, few of these projects retained broad social objectives, many were professionally managed with tenants having little power. They became more inward looking, concerned to preserve and defend the benefits which state subsidies provided for their middle income tenants and frequently well paid managers, rather than pioneer and represent a radical alternative to the mass produced, large scale, bureaucratically and professionally managed, products of welfare capitalism. Such concerns were, if anything, even more alien to the cooperative housing sector in Sweden which developed into a form, of home ownership, under the aegis of a few large scale, professionally administered organisations.

Of course, this highly generalized, broad brush description of shifts in western European housing politics passes over significant national variations in the nature and timing of the changes which occurred. Economic and political circumstances combined to produce distinctive outcomes. Thus the shift away from socialised provision occurred far earlier in Britain and Germany, for example, than in the Netherlands and Sweden. In addition, some countries, such as Germany, France and the Netherlands, provided assistance to sustain private rental housing, although the long term decline of this sector accelerated as first the support for
social housing and later for home ownership left it competing on increasingly unequal terms (Harloe, 1985).

An important variable in the fortunes of social rented housing was the degree to which it had a broad base of political support. In the mainland European countries social housing organisations exerted a considerable influence on most major political parties for many years, because they accommodated many white collar and skilled manual workers who voted for these parties, and because of the inclusion of organised labour interests within the leadership of parties such as the Dutch and German Christian Democrats.

However, despite these national differences across Europe, it is the broad similarities in the pattern of social rented developments which seem most striking, especially when contrasted with the very different post-war history of US public housing. Here, as in Europe, economic growth, full employment, rapid urbanisation and major demographic changes created a high demand for new housing. However, the political and economic conditions which allowed a rapid growth of home ownership occurred in America a generation before they occurred in most European countries. So, when the public housing program was restarted in 1949, it was defined as a residual form of provision, very largely (in the big cities at least) being used as an adjunct to private sector, state assisted urban renewal operations, rehousing the urban poor. Moreover, the generalised political hostility to public housing, whipped up by the real estate industries, ensured that the accommodation was provided in a form and with a financial structure that was almost pre-programed to fail and to amplify the stigmatisation of its tenants. The crisis which public housing faced
from the late 1960s was an all too predictable outcome of the way in which it had been re-established in 1949.

Social housing in decline: 1975–92
Reference has already been made to some of the consequences from the 1970s of the break up of the post-war economic order for social rented housing, such as the pressures to restrain public expenditure. This finally led governments to make changes in the financing of this housing which had been advocated in expert reports from the late 1950s—raising rents, reducing subsidies, and targeting assistance through housing allowances on lower income households (see, for example, UN Economic Commission for Europe, 1958). The higher rents combined with other factors, such as high subsidies for home ownership, escalating capital gains and low real interest rates on mortgages, to encourage an increasing flow of middle income households into home ownership. A paradoxical consequence of this was that new and costly social rented housing which had been constructed in the 1960s and early 1970s began to be occupied by low income households, aided by housing allowances, rather than by the better off tenants at whom it had been targeted originally.

An outcome of these changes is that, while in many cases the existing stock of social rented housing has continued to accommodate a fairly wide range of income and social groups, the principal remaining new demand for this rented housing has narrowed and become concentrated on lower income households, including many who are outside the labour market. This change has been slower in some countries than in others, nor is it, on the whole, welcomed by the social landlords and their existing tenants who
frequently resist government attempts to redefine and limit the role of social rented housing as housing for the poor.

However, the shift is reinforced by changing perceptions, on the part of some housing consumers, about the relative physical and environmental qualities of social rented housing vis à vis private housing. Negative evaluations of social rented housing have been amplified, for example through the media and by politicians, by the highly publicised failures of some of the expensive social rented housing built in the 1960s and early 1970s. This housing, while it achieves high standards of space and internal amenities, is located in developments which are rejected by households who can pay for the private sector alternatives. For such households the choice between paying high rents and rapidly rising heating and other costs for this type of social rented housing, or buying a preferred form of housing which, throughout much of the past two decades, has also been an appreciating capital asset has not been a difficult one. They have opted increasingly for the latter. Moreover, such households are no longer prepared to accept the bureaucratic management regimes which have accompanied the growth of large scale social housing organisations, and which contrast poorly with what is frequently seen as the realm of freedom and self-determination in the private sector.

However, the changing nature of the demand for social rented housing has not just occurred as a by-product of the loss from the sector of many middle income households. There has also been a growing replacement of low income demand. Beginning in the 1960s in some cases, later in others, urban renewal and gentrification has sharply reduced the stock of poor quality private rental housing, which had been the major source of
accommodation, rather than social rented housing, for many poor households. In addition, various demographic and social changes, such as the growth of the aged population and of single parent households have added to low income housing demand. Moreover, the ending of full employment and economic restructuring, with the development of polarised urban labour markets in the last fifteen years, have added to this low income demand. In many countries a significant proportion of this economically marginalised population, concentrating in social rented housing, consists of those ethnic minority households and 'guest workers' and their descendants, welcomed by governments in the 1960s as their growing economies demanded a fresh supply of labour, but who are now locked into low income jobs or kept out of the labour market altogether, and who have frequently become the victims of racially motivated violence in recent years.

It is important to emphasise yet again that this transition has been, and continues to be, a gradual process. In none of the European countries discussed in this chapter has social rented housing become purely the preserve of very low income households as it became many years ago in the USA. In many cases the longer established social housing tenants have a much wider range of incomes and occupational backgrounds, many of them have not been tempted into home ownership, in part at least because they frequently benefit from relatively low historic cost related rents. These tenants frequently concentrate in low rise, attractive developments built before and since the high rise era, leaving the latter, unpopular stock to the new, low income tenants who now form a high proportion of the new demand for social rented housing. The original expectation, that this latter stock would enable a process of internal filtering to occur, with
lower income households able to occupy housing with low historic cost rents, has failed to materialize.

As many of the high rise projects have become increasingly problematic, the tendency to house there those who had little alternative choice but to accept such units and locations, has grown. Today the conditions in and problems of some social rented estates, which combine poor environmental quality, deteriorating structures and high concentrations of multiply disadvantaged households are producing a situation comparable with that which typifies much of the public housing sector in the USA.

There are some interesting parallels to be drawn between the tutelary style of housing management which accompanied residual forms of social rented housing in the inter-war period, and the social service and crime control elements built into many of the rash of special programs which have sprung up across Europe in the last fifteen years to deal with 'problem estates'. Once again, the issue is not just the provision of lower income accommodation, but also the management and containment of the marginalised urban poor.

This reconstitution of social rented housing as residual housing for economically marginal groups varies in its current level of development, both within national stocks and, as already indicated, cross-nationally. In countries such as Sweden and the Netherlands, where mass social rented housing became most strongly established and where it remains most strongly resistant to this transition, the changes are at a much earlier stage than in France or Britain, for example. Nevertheless, both countries have developed a residualised segment of social housing and with the changes in housing policy following the recent loss of power by the social democrats in Sweden and the Heerma memorandum, which aims to set Dutch housing
policy on a distinctively new direction in the 1990s, it is hard to argue that they are exceptions to the general processes of change described above. In Germany the change is occurring as a large part of the social rented stock is freed from the requirement to house lower income groups, leaving a residual low income stock, mostly controlled by the local authorities. In Denmark the social housing organisations are trying to find a way of both preserving a more mixed population in socio-economic terms while accommodating government pressures to target their new letting on lower income groups.

Conclusion
By the early 1990s, following the breakdown over the previous fifteen or so years of the economic system and the compact between labour, capital and the state which had underpinned the 'long boom' and the policy regime of welfare capitalism, it seems that obituaries can truly be written to note the passing of the post-war golden age of social rented housing. The social and economic forces which led, after 1945, to the adoption of the 'mass' model of social rented housing in various advanced capitalist countries, have been dissipated and the reversion, in detailed forms which suit the distinctive circumstances of the times of course, to the more restricted residual model of provision is now well in train.

5 See for example Lundqvist, Elander and Danermark, 1990 for a discussion of the breakdown, since the mid-seventies, of Swedish social democratic housing policies and the emergence of polarization, between tenures and within the social rented sector. On the significance of the Heerma memorandum for Dutch housing policy, see Boelhouwer and Priemus, 1990. It should be added that these authors believe that the residualising tendencies which this memorandum seem to presage will be more or less successfully resisted, although the growth of a residualised sub-sector of Dutch social housing is not in doubt.
If this analysis is correct, we should not expect to see any return in the 1990s to some form of more extensive and broadly targeted social housing provision simply because of the contemporary growth of unmet housing needs. Not unless such needs have a wider strategic significance for the functioning of the societies in which they occur will the residualising tendency be reversed. One scenario might be if the continuing fragility of the advanced capitalist economies leads to a disastrous collapse in the functioning of private housing markets and hence their ability to accommodate politically and economically key sections of the population. In various countries, at various times in the past fifteen years, this has seemed a real possibility, which might even have provoked a generalised crisis in the banking and financial systems of these countries, and internationally.

Finally, while the focus here is on the two main models of social rented housing provision which have been dominant in different periods in some of the major advanced capitalist societies, there are two further models which a wider ranging analysis would also have to encompass. The first concerns the form of state housing provision developed in the former socialist countries. This is now in dissolution, with large scale privatisation of the existing stock and a shift in the main emphasis of new urban housing production to the private sector. Whether this seems likely to result in a (one-sided) convergence between patterns of housing provision in western and eastern Europe, or some new eastern variant, is a matter for debate (Hegedus and Tosics, 1991).

The second model, already touched on, is that which can trace its origins back to early manual and white collar workers' cooperative housing projects. As noted above, this form of provision was assimilated within
the mass model in the post-war welfare states. Nevertheless, over the past few years there has been in many countries a growth of small scale and localised innovative forms of low to moderate income housing provision which are frequently characterised by some of the features which existed in many early workers' cooperatives, such as genuine tenant control of management and a strictly non-profit format. However, this revival of the cooperative model may face a cruel dilemma. On the one hand, it is unlikely to become a major alternative form of social housing provision unless it can move beyond its purely local basis and become incorporated in the program of one or other of the major political parties, presumably the social democrats. On the other hand, the incorporation within mainstream state housing policies might well lead to the destruction of the very features of autonomy and self determination which characterise this model and distinguish it from statist programs of mass social rented housing. However, not even this prospect seems likely at present for there is little sign of any reorientation of the housing policies of social democracy along such lines.

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6 For a study of such projects in three countries see Harloe and Martens, 1990
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