

Political approaches to social housing sociology essay

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Figure : Maslow's hierarchy of needs Maslow's hierarchy of needs, places housing as central to achieving health and well-being of people (Lester et al, 1983). JOURNAL on pc. Housing is defined as a " place of residence, the home and place of homemaking, and can represent a significant source and store of wealth" (Alcock et al, 2003). It also involves the market, the voluntary sector, the process of production, the state, ownership, control and exchanges. Images of deprivation and affluence, social standing and status, stigmatization and issues of segregation, community integration and social exclusion are all strongly associated with housing (Alcock et al, 2003). D: EliaNa!!= pLJMU!! =)Health & Housing in Society (5060TEF)AssessmentsEssaymaslows-hierarchy. jpgFor those people who are in housing need, there is some housing available by the state. The social housing, as it is called, is specified as " housing that is let at low rents and on a secure basis to those people in housing need and it is generally provided by councils and not-for-profit organisations such as housing associations (Shelter, 2013). Text document on pc. The ownership of the social housing in England belongs to the Housing Associations and to the Local Authorities, which are often referred as ' council housing' as well (Fitzpatrick S. and Pawson H, 2007). Nevertheless, housing is one of the main factors that influence tenants' health. According to Ineichen (1994), some of the most important themes that stand out include the influence of housing on emotional and mental health; the influence of housing on physical activity; the association of housing and poverty; the changing role of the public health agencies; blurring distinction between the renters and the owners; and health related design features of housing. In the late 1940's, the level of

the output of council housing was really high, their quality was good too and in the sense that the majority of new housing was in the form of two - storey and three - bedroomed houses of generous proportions. The total image of council housing was generally positive. Forty years later, the position of the council housing was totally different. The output was barely a tenth of the level which was achieved in 1948; there were serious problems of disrepair and the new buildings that came up were increasingly emphasised small, one - bedroomed flats. Due to these, the popular image of the council housing has become much less attractive than it was some years earlier (Malpass P, 2000) Moreover, when the Thatcher government was in power, the Housing Act 1980 was introduced as an act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom which gave the ability to house tenants to buy their dwellings from Local Authorities in really attractive price (Greener I. and Powell M, 2008). The act came under Michael Heseltine's remit who was an environment secretary at that time. Some board objectives for the Right to Buy were set by him in June 1979. His objectives were to increase the individual freedom of choice and sense of personal opportunities and continuing improvement in the quality of housing. He stated out that " it lays the foundations for one of the most important revolutions of the century" and he claimed that " dreams are going to come true for many more people" too (Balchin P, 2002) The sale price of a council house was based generally on its valuation of market. It also includes a discount which reflects the rents paid by tenants and to encourage take - up. The discount of each household was depended on how long they have been living in the house. The act allowed tenants who have lived in their dwellings for at least three years to

buy their house at 33% discount of the market price, or 44% off for a flat. If someone was a tenant for over twenty years, he or she got a 50% discount (Toynbee P, 2002). <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2002/oct/11/society.housing>. The Right to Buy applies to anyone who has been a council tenant for a minimum of three years and those who occupy purpose - build dwellings for the elderly are excluded (Richards S, 2007). The aim of the scheme was that for every additional dwelling sold, a new home would be built for affordable rent, which will increase the number of properties available for those on the waiting list. Home ownership grew from 55% of the population in 1980 to 64% in 1987 and to 67% in 1990, but the number of the public houses built was not increased as expected. They had been reduced from 170.000 in the mid 1970's to just 35.000 in 1990 (Campbell J, 2003). So, whilst the government seems to be encouraging a new wave of house building by Local Authorities, it is unclear whether the system as a whole is actually working and whether it is providing support to those that most need it. Because of that new policy that was legislated, the health of the tenants was influenced significantly. In accordance with the Radio 4 analysis about social housing on the 26th of February 2009, "there are psychological scars carried around by people who are perfectly aware of the fact that they are regarded by other people as inferiors". This is because that legislation promotes and reinforces the division of the population in social classes which is already really strong in United Kingdom. This is linked to serious social stigmatisation and makes people feel depressed and more detached than ever, feelings that are associated with poor mental and emotional health. The Right to Buy is also related to the success and the

progress of the people; those who did not own a property were deemed to be failures (Allen C, 2009). Furthermore, the process of the Right to Buy is associated with the wider processes of physical well - being too. Since the government gave the opportunity to citizens to buy their house, they preferred to buy a high quality dwelling which is located at the best areas of the country. For instance, the built environment can play a key role on physical health of people. According to Marmot (2010), safe roads, cycle paths and parks; street lightening and good visibility in urban designs of the community; access to local shops and to public transport are some aspects that can improve the mental and physical well -being of people as well as the aesthetic and clear environment and good quality of air. The existence of a private entrance leads to a significant increase in privacy which in turn increases residents' feeling of control (Gibson M. 2011). Thereby, people are possessed by a feeling of security and they move around carefree. Although the Right to Buy had proved to be one of the most successful reforms undertaken by the Thatcher government because clearly the majority of people wish to own their own home, it seems like the Right to Buy was designed in order to pass the responsibility of the dwellings to the new homeowners (Greener I. and Powell M, 2008). This legislation cause several implications on housing as well such as the phenomenon of residualisation. The term ' residualisation' means a process in which a residue is created. Specifically, when people move in some number from a neighbourhood or community because they believe it is no longer a desirable place to live, then what they leave behind is a social residue of less enabled people (Malpass P, 1990). As the Right to Buy gave the ability to people to buy their

house, it is concluded that the newest dwellings which are located at the best areas of the country were sold firstly. So, the houses that remained for the other people were those of poor housing conditions; located at areas that are associated with crime, poor health, unemployment, educational underachievement, inadequate local services and public transport (UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL POLICY 7TH ED.). Thus, residualisation of the social rented sector in the United Kingdom has been defined as " the tendency for the sector to become increasingly the preserve of the poorest in society" (Clarke A. and Monk S, 2011). The social balance of the areas is disturbed by the departures and the people who remain are faced with concentrated poverty together with strengthening social stigmatisation and social exclusion. For example, families with low income are forced into dependency on housing benefit so, their choices of housing placement are restricted to the increasingly stigmatisation of social housing. They do not afford to pay for a high quality home, so their only choice is to select a dwelling that may be unhealthy to live in. Those feelings are particularly relevant during a period that there is increased evidence that housing circumstances relate to and contribute to problems of social disadvantage more generally. Those people who live deprived neighbourhoods are contributed to social exclusion. They are stigmatised by others and they do not have the feeling of belonging and being a part of the community; they condemn themselves to live in solitude and margin (Lee P. and Murie A, 1997). Other than that, many people reported that " large blocks of flats discourage social interaction", an aspect which is linked to poorer mental and physical health (Gibson M et al. 2011). Overcrowding, poor

soundproofing and noise external are some conditions that are defined as unsuitable for people's concentration. It is harder to concentrate, to study and to work; conditions that influence the performance at work, university or school. Moreover, stairwells (if there are any) " provide space for strangers to hang out, often taking drugs and drinking, littering and making excessive noise". That can cause extreme stress and fear to residents as well as lack of safety and disturbances at the time of sleeping duration (Gibson M. 2011). Apart from these, many of the houses that had been sold were built between 1950's and 1960's and today are referred to as ' Non Traditional Housing'. Many of those dwellings were of poor quality, were designed defective and had serious structural defects (Somerville P. and Springings N, 2005). Many of the residents had to deal with damp and mould on the walls. A survey done by the English House Condition shows that in 2009 about 1. 8 million houses had damp problems and around 6. 7 million dwellings were non - decent. Damp was also more prevalent in poor households, where 12% lived with damp problems compared with just 7% of households not living in poverty. The mould on the walls originates from inadequate heating of the house. Damp and poor house heating have been linked with asthma, breathing problems and people's concentration. If the room temperature is too cold is more difficult to keep your mind concentrated (Arblaster L. and Hawtin M, 1993). Other than that, indoor pollution may derive from loss of carbon dioxide; radon or fuel combustion products can cause many issues in the human body such as different types of cancer, including lung cancer (Darby S et al, 2004) JOURNAL PC.