



DECADE: Retrofit

Is the only green building the one that already exists?

The role of the existing, sitting alongside the new, is paramount in creating successful places. But in the recent past, a piecemeal approach to improving the performance of existing buildings to address energy targets has resulted in questionable decisions – from wholesale demolitions to uncoordinated insulation of existing post-war housing stock – often without input from construction professionals or building occupants.

Notwithstanding, we have to meet EU, UK and Scottish Climate and Energy Legislation, including an EU Energy Efficiency Directive requiring the establishment of long-term strategies for mobilising investment in the renovation of all existing buildings (public and private; domestic and non-domestic).

There are also societal pressures. 945,000 households in Scotland are predicted to be in fuel poverty by 2016 – 40% of Scottish homes – and the investment cost of alleviating this would be £7.4 billion/£7,800 per property.

So why is this important to A&DS?

Over the last ten years, housing has been a key issue for A&DS – from issues around placemaking and involvement in Scotland's first Housing Expo in Inverness, to our role in policies such as Designing Streets and the new Place Standard. We also participated in the Scottish Government's Sustainable Housing Strategy Group, which addressed housing needs, fuel poverty and climate change, and provided an opportunity to explore economic, environmental and social sustainability impacts of housing and housing

supply from new ways of delivery, to new funding models; to skills and training needs.

A key output from the SHSG was the Housing Futures Report. This will spawn a plethora of housing activity over the next few years, which we've been invited to contribute to at a variety of levels.

Changing attitudes to 'ordinary' existing buildings is about more than complying with legislation – it is about changing our relationship with how we shape and use the places we live in and what they mean to us.

Lori McElroy
Head of Sust. and Access Programmes, A&DS

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Glasgow Renaissance

by Chris Leslie

'The skyline of Glasgow is set to be radically transformed ...'

Since 2006, when Glasgow City Council made this statement, the city has lost 25% of its high-rise flats and many of its housing schemes.

The word 'renaissance' literally translates from the French as 'rebirth', and Glasgow has a long history of rebirths – from the city of monks to a city of merchants; to a city of industry; then to its most recent reinvention – or rebirth – as a city of culture and 'second city of shopping'.

The city's many regenerations are no different to other deindustrialised cities in Western Europe, but the collapse of heavy industry nationally has left Glasgow at a particular disadvantage. Head out from the swish city centre and you'll find vast brownfield wastelands and failed housing schemes in desperate need of investment.

Demolition is, of course, familiar to Glaswegians. In the previous round of mass demolition in the 1960s and 70s, tens of thousands of Glaswegians were decanted from slums into new schemes and high-rise flat developments. These represented a utopian vision for social housing – a kitchen and indoor bathroom, central heating and mixer taps were seen as a solution to some of the worst slum conditions in Europe at that time.

By the turn of the 21st century, many of these high-rise flats were no longer a solution, but a problem. The wrecking ball has been replaced by multi-million pound demolition contracts, explosives developed by NASA and

spectacular demolition shows for all to watch. But the simple ethos of 'knock-em-down-and-build-em-back-up-again' remains the same.

Glasgow has the highest concentration of residential flats in the UK, and since 2006 a quarter of the city's high-rise housing has been demolished. Councillors, officials and local media celebrate the death of a high-rise as progress. There's little time for contemplation or nostalgia in a city that markets its renaissance through trendy bars, bistros and shops, servicing a booming and diverse cultural scene.

But for many of the residents in the deprived and failed housing schemes in the north and east of the city, the reality of this 'renaissance' is hard to credit. Dalmarnock lay derelict and forgotten for 30 years before its salvation via a two-week, mega-sporting event. High-rise flats are marked as unfit for purpose and demolished while flats of the same basic build and design in the same scheme are pardoned – and then seem to 'prosper'.

And what of the new-build schemes that replace them, or the scattering of communities across the city? Besides bricks and mortar and 1960's architectural 'disasters', Glasgow is also losing part of its history, its communities and memories – just as it did in the 1960s.

No one can argue that Glasgow needs regeneration, or that a 'renaissance' could bring positive change. But does this renaissance have an end game, or is Glasgow poised for an endless cycle of demolition and new build? Will we be witnessing the same whole scale demolition of the houses we are building today? Glasgow's choice

is not between changing and not changing, but about the nature of that change, who owns it, who develops it and how sustainable it is. Until we have that debate, the Glasgow Renaissance will be of limited value.

About the author:

CHRIS LESLIE is a BAFTA Scotland (New Talent) award-winning documentary photographer and filmmaker from Glasgow. His final MA project documented untold stories of regeneration in his home city. He continues that long-term project today under the title *The Glasgow Renaissance*.

Saving Glengate Hall - a collaborative approach

by Kirsty Macari, Angus Council

Over the last ten years, what we do with problematic buildings, particularly in town centres, has changed. In the beginning, empty properties weren't an issue – financing projects was relatively straightforward and funding was readily available. These buildings were investments and opportunities. So what changed?

Funding and other financial aspects became harder to come by and people were choosing to move to new-build properties – new build was less problematic (no listed building consent required, parking standards could be easily met). As the ten years passed by, services and businesses moved away from multiple building locations; more and more 'interesting' buildings became vacant; and, as the number and vacancies increased, the condition of them deteriorated.

What do you do with an empty, run-down eyesore in the centre of town? Nothing? Demolish it? Save it? ... Can we save it? How? Together of course!

The Category C-listed Glengate Hall in the rural town of Kirriemuir, Angus had lain empty for over ten years. The former church, and latterly hall, no longer served its original function as an important part of the community. The mixed, and often negative, views of the building and its condition concerned the new owner and the local authority.

Angus Council identified it as one of four Priority Projects within what was to be the forthcoming Kirriemuir Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme. There was now a possible solution to the main issue in saving the building – funding!

Its landlocked location within the heart of the town's conservation area meant that a different approach was required to save the building – a collaborative approach between the owner, Angus Council, the Scottish Government and Historic Scotland. This required a defined and agreed goal, and lots of constructive communication. And, as well as the building itself, the short-, medium- and longer-term benefits to the wider area had to be considered.

This approach not only provided nine affordable units in line with identified local demand, but also an opportunity for the community to remember the beauty and history of the building, re-calling stories of its previous life. It was the catalyst in positively driving forward the town's regeneration and the opportunity for additional learning for both the local and wider area.

It re-ignited a passion for the town centre and, as we move forward through the next ten years, we must continue to learn from this:

- Talk to each other, share ideas and projects. These buildings and the influence that they can have on re-igniting the spark in our town centres is vital; it isn't Wonder Woman or Superman who is coming to the rescue, it's a collective – the Fantastic Four, X-Men or Batman and Robin.
- Be objective and realistic (but with a spark of imagination and positivity) and consider both short- and long-term impacts and benefits. These buildings and towns have been here for years, we need to consider them for years to come.

- We don't have all the answers all of the time, but take a sense of pride when these projects are completed and move forward into the next ten years and beyond!

About the author:

KIRSTY MACARI is a planner with a Pg Dip in Urban Design. Kirsty has been employed by Angus Council since 2005 and is Senior Planning Officer, covering a variety of specialisms including access and conservation. She is a steering group member of the Local Authority Urban Design Forum (LAUDF).

Community-based retrofit: the beginnings and the outcome

by Raymond Young

In the beginning, this was not about retrofit. It was about providing bathrooms for families living in Glasgow tenements that were to be torn down in a planned programme of demolition and new construction. The Comprehensive Development Area (CDA) programmes were to take up to 15 years to complete, and families were expected to share an outside toilet with their neighbours during that period. Could a short-life, low-cost, high-maintenance upgrade, including installing a bathroom, make their lives better? And, equally important, could the residents (some owner-occupiers and some tenants) participate or even control the process?

Govan CDA was chosen as a place where these questions might be answered by a student architect-based project, which became known as ASSIST. Govan was chosen because the local civic society – the New Govan Society – was participating in the redesign of the old burgh following the recommendations of the Skeffington Report. Within Govan, the Taransay Street area next to Fairfield's shipyard became the focus of the project as it was planned to be the last area to be redeveloped.

Five interrelated challenges needed to be resolved – resident commitment; fitting bathrooms into existing flatted housing (and with the occupants in situ); complex administrative processes; finance (grants and loans); and multiple ownership.

Community development processes saw resident interest and enthusiasm build up to the point that Annie Gibbons ordered the first bathroom; the technical challenges were addressed; senior local

authority people helped to speed up the administration processes, and Annie's house became a show flat for several weeks. Thereafter, with a demonstration that it could be done, other residents and policymakers bought into it.

ASSIST provided a free architecture, coordination and administrative service, located in the heart of the project, funded by grants from the government and the Wates Foundation. And improved flats rolled off the production line – with residents living through the two weeks and acting as excellent clerks of works.

Two major hurdles remained. What about those who neither wanted nor were able to have the flat improved? A housing association was created to acquire these flats, but it had a significant difference to any previous association. Membership was open to all local residents – thus becoming the first Community Based Housing Association. And money? The project caught the imagination of the government's Housing Corporation and, in a partnership with the City Council, what had been a pilot was mainstreamed (with some differences) across the city and beyond.

The differences involved the housing associations, not architects, being the coordinator. With proper funding, more houses were bought by them. But the fundamental difference was that short-life improvement gave way to 30-year rehabilitation and, therefore, retrofits. Whole areas surrounding the central business district benefited from a change of policy from wholesale demolition to area renewal, including selective new building.

Key messages for the next decade: Given the right technical and administrative support, communities can become clients and transform their neighbourhoods and their lives.

About the author:

RAYMOND YOUNG is an architect by training and was one of the founder members of ASSIST, the community architecture practice in Govan that pioneered both tenement rehabilitation and community based housing associations, the story of which he tells in a book 'Annie's Loo', published by Argyll.

From the ground up: building communities within Glasgow's high rises

by Cathy Houston and Rupert Daly, Collective Architecture

Over the last 50 years, Glasgow has seen the rise and then demise of the high-rise building typology. Our work questions the demolition of many high-rise residential buildings, and argues that some could provide sustainable communities for the future.

When originally conceived, the high-rise typology was ambitious. Evolving alongside new technologies, it promised better living standards in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

As the typology progressed we began to see the ambition dissolve. Physical factors such as the local environment, configuration and the quality of construction became secondary to economies of scale, funding constraints and getting the number of units to financially 'stack up'.

While the demise, or at least the decision to demolish, may be due to the building itself (e.g. poor quality construction), the high-rise typology is often blamed for other societal issues – lack of a sense of place, identity or community. Many of these issues could instead be attributed to the dilution of the initial vision, changes in housing policy or even to changes in society itself.

Similar to the policy of tenement demolition in Glasgow, is it possible that the wholesale demolition of the high-rises is likely to be shortsighted, wasteful and largely unsuccessful?

Fortunately, a wrecking ball won't hit all high-rise developments just yet. Many are being refurbished, and energy improvements have become a priority – with insulated over-cladding and replacement windows

being commonplace. To complement these fabric works, we use other measures, such as feature lighting and artworks, to involve the residents in the refurbishment of their homes and re-install a sense of community pride.

Our latest project for Queens Cross Housing Association explores the potential of the refurbished high-rise. In 2012 Collective Architecture carried out an options appraisal for the Woodside area of Glasgow to investigate opportunities for the existing housing stock and surrounding open spaces. Housing ranged from 4-storey, deck-access flats to high-rise tower blocks.

Through extensive consultation, the local people identified a range of issues affecting them: perception and identity, refuse and recycling, access and security, building fabric, communal areas and the external environment. We investigated options for both demolition and retention of three dominant high-rises – the Cedar Flats – and concluded that the high-rises should be retained.

The appraisal's vision for a more sustainable community was based on four principle themes:

- Live, Play, Work & Grow
- Reduce, Reuse, Recycle & Recover
- Enhance the Existing
- Improved Energy Performance

Through these themes, we hope to achieve the basis of a circular low-carbon local economy. Carbon is effectively a currency in today's economy, which can be traded in derivatives.

Collective Architecture will carry out the fabric improvements to the Cedar 'multis', and this refurbishment will bring them to the forefront of energy performance in the UK. Targeting the Passivehouse EnerPHit standard for retrofit, the intention is to mitigate fuel poverty for the 314 homes within.

The proposals also seek to improve access and amenity within the blocks, with new communal entrances, new lifts and enclosed external balconies for use all year round.

Could Woodside be a truly sustainable community? Watch this space!

About the authors:

CATHY HOUSTON joined Collective Architecture in 2001 and has been the lead architect on a variety of regeneration schemes. RUPERT DALY is an architect at Collective Architecture specialising in sustainable design, low-carbon techniques and modern methods of construction.