Petty Commodity Housing or Dweller Control? A Critique of John Turner's Views on Housing Policy

ROD BURGESS

Department of Geography, University College London

Summary. - The paper reviews four major aspects of John Turner's work on low-income housing: his conception of the nature of housing; the relationship he identifies between the popular, government and private sectors; his concept of the role of the State and the planner; and, his policy recommendations. These are all subjected to a critical examination, and a Marxist framework is suggested as a more effective means of analysing the problems and policies under discussion. The debate between 'state-assisted self-help' and 'official housing' policies is situated in the context of the conflicting interests of the different fractions of capital tied to the housing process. Turner's policies, it is argued, could only be implemented alongside rather than instead of, existing State policies, and never on the scale and in the manner considered critical to their success.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years we have witnessed the proliferation of an immense literature dedicated to the study of Third World urbanization. The tangible effects of such a spectacular concentration of intellectual effort on urban issues are hardly encouraging: urban problems would seem to grow at the same order of magnitude as the literature offered to explain and solve them. In the area of housing and settlement, this literature can be loosely classified into three elements as follows:

(1) The attempt to understand housing issues and the development of squatter settlements through a series of theoretical constructs (e.g. western urban land use theory, modernization, marginality and dependency theory).

(2) A body of empirical and statistical analyses of the housing and squatter problems on the neighbourhood, urban and national scales that is dedicated to the description of existing conditions and the calculation and projection of future housing needs.

(3) A continuous polemic that centres around the most effective ways of 'solving' the housing problem and the correct strategy to be adopted towards the squatter settlement (e.g. self-help or 'autoconstruction' versus institutionally supplied housing, eradication versus legality, etc.)

In recent years, John F. C. Turner has emerged as one of the most important and influential writers on Third World housing policies and settlement processes and we are somewhat fortunate in having examples of all these elements within the corpus of Turner's work. In the 1960s, his fieldwork in Peru and Mexico led him to a critique of government housing policies and 'western' housing standards, to the development of an alternative understanding of Latin American urban structure within the context of newly-collected data on the intra-city movement of migrants, and to the classification of squatter settlements on the basis of the cross-tabulation of rates of physical improvement of the settlement and its legal status. These interests were subsequently theorized on a more general level, with reference to materials taken from systems analysis, and from a wider range of Third World countries. In the present period Turner has achieved an even higher level of abstraction.
broadening his argument onto a global level (including western industrial societies), tying his ideas in with those of the Intermediate Technology School, and within the framework of a limited degree of self-criticism, developing and synthesizing his previous work.

Housing has come into the orbit of the debate on Intermediate Technology in recent years not only because of the significance of construction activities within 'informal' employment structures, but also because of the growing political and social sensitivity of the housing problem in Third World societies. It accompanies and is a part of what Pradilla (1974: p. 3) has called 'the urbanization of political activity'. It has become increasingly clear that Turner's ideas, whether he likes it or not, now form part of a growing consensus of opinion amongst housing experts, planners and international aid groups that self-help housing is not only an effective social and political palliative, but also makes good sense economically.

The time then would seem appropriate for a critique of those policies that are being suggested and the concepts that underlie them. Lack of space prevents a full discussion of Turner's work on Latin American urban structure and on the classification of low-income settlements, and I would like to concentrate on just four aspects of his work:

(1) His conception of the nature of housing.
(2) The relationship he identifies between popular (low-income), government and private sectors in housing.
(3) His concept of the role of the State and the planner in housing policies.
(4) A critical review of his policy recommendations.

It is necessary, however, to preface this analysis with a few comments on the concept of 'self-help'.

First, 'self-help' is not necessarily 'self-built'. A degree of self-help is obviously involved in most types of housing activity - many people structurally alter their own houses even when they are provided with a ready-made unit. On the other hand, it is very uncommon to find a neighbourhood in which a considerable number of houses have not had some sort of paid, skilled or unskilled labour involved in the construction.

Second, 'self-help' has been used to characterize both individual and collective efforts. It has been identified as the progressive improvement of an existing house or settlement, and as the construction of an entirely new one. It has been used as a description of a building process that occurs spontaneously in many areas of the world, and it has been used normatively to prescribe a set of policies for housing agencies and policy-making bodies.

Third, 'self-help' is not a new idea but a very old one. The new idea in fact is that people do not and should not build their own houses. It is only in the last two centuries or so, and in relatively restricted areas of the world, that the majority of people have not had to build their own houses. Historically this has been a function of how far the capitalist division of labour has been directed towards the satisfaction of housing needs. As we shall see the status of housing as a commodity is critical to an understanding of the limitations of self-help housing solutions.

Fourth, the term 'self-help' has distinct ideological connotations. It is a word that was used widely in the nineteenth century and today many of its proponents argue its merits in ways that are very similar to Victorian ideas of self-improvement. Often the arguments for self-help can fall into a fundamentally reactionary position. Arguments against state intervention in the economy, for the reduction in scale of economic activities and the drastic de-industrialization of society can be seen as part of the anti-urban, anti-industrial bias that has been an important undercurrent of Western social science. It has also constituted an important element in anarchist thought. In 1872 for example, Engels was engaged in an intense debate with the anarchist Sax over the nature of the housing question and had occasion to remark (Engels, 1872: p. 59):

Capital does not want to abolish the housing shortage even if it could, this has now been finally established. There remain therefore only two other expedients: self-help on the part of the workers, and state assistance. Herr Sax, an enthusiastic worshipper of self-help is able to report miraculous things about it also in regard to the housing question. Unfortunately he is compelled to admit right at the beginning that self-help can only effect anything where the cottage system either already exists or where it is feasible, that is once again only in the rural areas. In the big cities, even in England, it can be effected only in a 'roundabout way' and therefore always only imperfectly, namely only insofar as the principle of private ownership is so strengthened as to react on the quality of the dwelling.

One of the greatest problems in the debate on self-help housing is that it is very difficult to define what its proponents mean by self-help. The presumption, at least, behind much self-help philosophy is that people should do more for themselves. They should do a lot more of
what other people are at present doing for them now, and they should be encouraged to carry out themselves a lot of what they currently expect other people to do for them. Put in this way we can immediately see the origins of the controversy over self-help. A society that is based on the expansion and deepening of the social division of labour is a society that is based on a collectivity of specialized individuals rather than on an aggregate of multi-skilled individuals. Moreover given the necessity of the capitalist mode of production to deepen the social division of labour, it is hardly surprising that any movement that questions this necessity is viewed with suspicion. However, under conditions in which this process has been impeded, as for example under the current conditions of crisis in the world capitalist system, then this very system will reassess its opposition, and will find in such self-help systems the economic and ideological means necessary for the maintenance of the status quo and the general conditions for capitalist development. Hence the revival of interest in self-help systems despite their self-proclaimed radicalism, and hence the overriding concern of self-help theorists, such as Turner, to frame their arguments in policy terms, and at the same time to conceal or deny the political character of what they recommend under a blanket of technical arguments.3

2. TURNER’S CONCEPT OF HOUSING

The keynote of Turner's work is his concept of housing. If we analyse the alternative meanings that language ascribes to housing then, Turner argues (Turner and Fichter, 1972: p. 151), we can isolate the source of confusion that surrounds the definition of value in housing:

In English the word 'housing' can be used as a noun or as a verb. The verb 'to house' describes a process or activity of housing. While the idea of housing as a collective noun is obviously associated with housing activities, the word does not generally indicate this fact. On the other hand the activity of housing is too difficult to conceive without including the house promoted, built or used.4

Turner argues that the value of any physical object cannot be sought in terms of its physical attributes, but only in the relationship between it and the user, and as such a relationship is a variable one, then so too will its value vary — the value of a house must be determined by how far it satisfies or frustrates the need of its users (Turner and Fichter, 1972: p. 159):

In other words if housing is perceived as functions of what housing does in the lives of its users — of the roles which the processes play in their life-history and not in the material qualities of the physical products, then the material worth of the objects and the manner of their production are entirely dependent on their highly variable uses. These uses in turn vary with the changing demands imposed by changes in the context, or in the location of the processes in the same context.

In Housing by People, Turner (1976: pp. 60–61) also introduces the concept of 'market-value'. The utility of a house cannot be equated with the material standard of the goods and services it embodies. Such standards are ascribed a 'market-value' and these market-values are very distinct from use-values:

It is entirely reasonable to speak about the market value of houses. It is also entirely reasonable to speak about the human and social values of housing action or housing processes. But it is absurd to mix these sets of terms and their meanings. The performance of housing, i.e. what it does for people is not described by housing standard, i.e. what is materially speaking.

The value of a house is what it does for people rather than what it is, and as the market-value can only deal with the latter dimension, it can only give a partial view of housing value. Neither can the market-value ever be an effective measure (Turner, 1976: p. 61):

Only in an impossible world of limitless resources and perfect justice where people could have their cake and eat it too could there be a coincidence of human and material values. For the present we must accept that as long as there are unsatisfied desires for material goods and services people must choose between the cakes they can afford to eat. So long as this fact of life remains and as long as people's priorities vary, the usefulness of things will vary independently of their material standard or monetary value.

In other words the impossibility of transcending material scarcity, it is argued, will always be responsible for the difference between a house's use-value and its market-value, and this gives rise to the 'issue of use-value versus market-value' (Turner, 1976: p. 153).

(a) Critique

It should be immediately apparent that there exists a considerable degree of confusion and contradiction within this presentation. First, there is a false identity of 'product' and 'commodity' (i.e. commodity status is seen purely in material terms). Secondly, there is the one-sided identification of the housing process or activity with use-value or utility. Thirdly,
there seems to be a high level of confusion over the relationship between material attributes and market-values. Turner seems to equate the two by identifying market-values as some form of material measurement. The nature, type, degree and quality of this measurement is never adequately specified. The material aspects of a house somehow become market-values.

This confusion over the nature of 'product', 'utility', and 'market-value' is not accidental but merely reflects the fact that Turner remains on the level of the appearance of the housing object and hence remains mystified by its reified form. Taken together with the statement that the 'opposition' between use-value and market-value can be traced to an a priori condition of scarcity, the ideological nature of this conception of housing becomes more obvious. This argument will be more fully developed shortly, but let us return to the more immediate critique of this concept of housing.

Turner's error can be isolated in two areas:

1. In the misunderstanding of the relationship between utility (use-value) and market-value (exchange-value).
2. In the denial of commodity status to 'self-help' (or more recently 'dweller controlled') housing.

First of all we find in Turner the classical error that equates use-value with total utility and identifies market-value as the ratio of exchange. In classical economics the concept of 'need' is identified with the concept of 'demand' through notions such as 'revealed preference' which as Harvey (1973: p. 157) has remarked 'simply allow that people behave in the way they behave'. Turner's tack is somewhat different. He has tried to show how such a functional relationship is in fact dysfunctional: use-values versus market-values. As the market-value of a house cannot be an adequate measure of use-value it follows that self-help (popular) construction will produce better houses than the market because the users are the best judge.

Secondly, it is not surprising given Turner's concept of the relation between use-value and market-value that he does not consider self-help housing to be a commodity. Let us move on to that basic question: is a self-help house a commodity? To answer this question we have to go back to Marx's analysis of the relationship between exchange-value and use-value. When we are talking about a commodity, use-value and exchange-value have no meaning in themselves, but only in terms of their dialectical interaction:

The commodity is the direct unity of use and exchange value. The commodity is a use-value but as a commodity it is simultaneously not a use-value. It would not be a commodity, if it were a use-value for its owner, that is a direct means for the satisfaction of his own needs. The commodity is a use-value for its owner only insofar as it is an exchange value. The commodity therefore still has to become a use-value... a use-value for others. (Marx, 1859: p. 413).

Thus for Marx, a 'use-value has value only in use and is realized in the process of consumption' and therefore 'use-values as such lie outside of the sphere of investigation of political economy' (Marx, 1859). In relation to the self-help house the question then becomes: can it best be understood in the latter sense as a use-value for its producer, or do we have to take into consideration those instances where it acquires exchange-value, where it becomes a use-value for others?

The answer to this question is complicated by the particular characteristics of land and housing within a capitalist economy. First, they have always been an important method of storing actual and future use- and exchange-value. Second, in comparison with other goods and services they only rarely assume the commodity form because they enter relatively infrequently into the exchange process; and third, the use-values that people find in them are highly variable, as Turner rightly points out.

The status of land and housing cannot be understood purely or even primarily in terms of use-values, for as Marx (1859) correctly perceived this would mean that the principal activities and processes involved in housing and settlement would be placed 'outside of the sphere of investigation of political economy'. This is precisely where Turner wants to keep them and the ideological devices he employs to explain these processes are precisely those that attempt to rationalize this theoretical placement: 'to treat housing as a commodity is silly enough but to assume that it must or should be supplied by ever-larger pyramidal structures and centralizing technologies is suicidal' (Turner, 1976: p. 37). Nonetheless, in order to rescue his work from some of the more glaring inadequacies of such an analysis, he introduces the concept of market-value, but in a way that merely compounds the confusion. The issue becomes not the interpenetration of use-value and exchange-value in the one commodity form of housing, but rather that of 'use-value versus market-value' between two housing objects – the institutionalized house in which market-values dominate and which is obviously a commodity, and the self-help house in which use-values dominate and which is denied com-
modity status. This then is an ideological root of Turner’s argument. His one-sided recognition of use-values merely complements but does not get beyond the bourgeois economist’s concern merely for market-values. It will be seen that a more adequate understanding of the housing object can only be arrived at through the identification of the specific interpenetration of use- and exchange-value within each of the wide range of housing objects that can be produced within the capitalist mode of production – all of which necessarily assume the commodity form.

Turner’s concept of housing does not consider:

1. The transformation of the self-help house into the commodity form by the producer himself.
2. The fact that one man’s use-value can be another man’s exchange-value and vice-versa.
3. That a self-help house can be a very different commodity to the various interest groups operating in the broader urban market.

(b) Towards an alternative understanding of self-help housing

Under conditions of capitalism most objects are produced by agents different to those who consume them, with the exchange occurring through the market. However, the auto-production and consumption of a house does not in itself mean we can understand it outside of the process of commodity formation. First of all, it consumes commercial products that it uses as raw materials, such as cement, roofing materials, iron parts, electrical and sanitary equipment. These already have an exchange-value that is derived from the labour time spent on their elaboration. Secondly, the construction of the house involves a considerable labour input. This labour input can take three forms: it can be the investment of additional labour time (the prolongation of the working day); it can be labour put into construction during periods of unemployment; or, it can be the paid or unpaid labour of others. In every instance this labour power gives a new value to the materials used including the recycled throwaways as well as the commercial materials. The house then, being a product of human labour and incorporating a determined labour time is given a price on the capitalist market, which could be realized if the producer turned his use-value into an exchange-value by putting it on the market for sale and/or rent.

Self-help housing as a commodity differs from other housing commodities insofar as it is constructed immediately for the use of the producer rather than being produced for exchange by agents different to the consumer. The distinction therefore, as Pradilla (1976: p. 74) has pointed out, is between housing as a real commodity and housing as a potential commodity. There remain, however, some serious difficulties with this distinction. Two things should be pointed out. Once housing is conceived of in these terms, it is nonsense to look at low-income housing in terms of use-values alone, particularly when its constituent elements are either already valorized or are being valorized by the labour input. This is further emphasized by a fact that Turner readily admits: that a large quantity of the labour that is put into such housing is paid labour. Secondly, it is in the nature of the capitalist mode of production (as the logical development of Marx’s Capital demonstrates) that there should be a constant expansion of the sphere of commodity production for capitalist exchange. Such an expansion is a necessary condition of capitalist development and not an effect of it. The importance of this fact to self-help housing, to policy recommendations and Turner’s concept of settlement processes, will be examined shortly.

3. HOUSING PRODUCTION – AUTONOMY AND HETERONOMY

The most important component of Turner’s work deals with the relationship between popular construction and the ‘formal’ housing sector (both public and private). There remains a considerable degree of confusion as to how he identifies this relationship largely because of the curious mixture of hypothesis and policy prescription in his work in general (with the result that what is often gets confused with what ought to be). In order to clarify some of this misunderstanding we shall first have to look at the conceptual framework he has recently elaborated for what he calls a ‘viable housing policy’ (Turner, 1976).

Housing activities can be classified into three sets of operations – planning, construction and management – in which three sets of actors are involved: users (popular sector), suppliers (private and commercial sector), and regulators (public sector and government). These three sets of actors have very different interests: use-values predominate for users, profit maximization for the private sector, and the main-
tenance of public order for government. The relationship between these three groups can be understood in terms of autonomous and heteronomous systems, which are basically incompatible.

Bureaucratic, heteronomous systems are based on hierarchical structures and centralized, large-scale technology; they produce objects of high quality and at great cost, but these objects are of low use-value. As they supply institutionally defined products to institutionally defined consumers they cannot accommodate the necessary complexity and variability of housing needs. Generally speaking, the housing provided by such systems is badly matched with the needs of its users. Moreover, the ability to match housing supply and demand would seem to be inversely proportional to the degree of heteronomy in the system. The long-term productivity of heteronomous systems diminishes as they consume capital resources, and construction and maintenance costs spiral through their disproportionate dependency on borrowed capital. The end product is 'aesthetically hideous, socially alienating and technically incompetent architecture' (Turner, 1976: p. 49).

Autonomous systems on the other hand are locally self-governing and though they produce things of extremely varied standards, these products are generally of low cost and high use-value. The housing object which is produced by such systems is admirably adjusted to the needs of its users. It is not socially alienating, and in the long term productivity increases as capital is generated through the investment of household income.

Turner argues that all housing systems depend on more or less organized and institutionalized systems. No house can be built without land, tools, materials, skilled labour, management, and an exchange system. An adequate housing solution for low-income groups can only come about by ordering these elements within an autonomous system, and access to them 'is a function of law and its administration, and these in turn are functions of central authority' (Turner, 1976: p. 17). The essential characteristic of autonomous systems is user-control and the role of central administration should be limited to ensuring local and personal access to the appropriate technologies, land and credit. In this way the 'local forms of these elements can be left to the people and the local entrepreneurs that serve them' (Turner, 1976: p. 67).

A viable housing policy would be based:


2. On the use of small-scale technological and managerial tools, i.e. 'small is beautiful with the proviso that some jobs need large organizations and powerful machinery' (Turner, 1976: p. 155).

3. On the basis of 'prescriptive' laws (i.e. thou shalt), as only the former can guarantee the degree of equifinality necessary for the satisfaction of highly variable housing needs.

In order to achieve this there should be legislative controls limiting the concentration of resources, the modification of existing legislation on minimum standards and building procedures, the legalization of tenure of existing squatters' land, and the passage of laws that facilitate the supply of land, technology and credit to low-income groups.

Given this framework we are more able to situate the relationship between self-help and official housing in Third World societies. There is no doubt that Turner considers 'official' housing to be the product of heteronomous systems, and there is little doubt that he considers the activities of squatters to be nearer to autonomy than to heteronomy. He does argue however that such autonomy should be completed, so that the 'do-it-yourself component' is complemented by dweller control, with government-guaranteed access to resources at the local level. Housing can only be understood, evaluated and compared in relation to the levels of heteronomy and autonomy existing within and between these two systems. Thus the official housing product is high cost, economically unviable, heavily subsidized, socially undesirable and often mismatched to low-income housing needs: whilst official housing policies aggravate the housing problem through attitudes to slum-clearance and minimum standards. Popular construction, however, gives immediate possession. The sequence of building operations is better adjusted to people's needs, there is more space, it strengthens family ties, and allows for the formation of multi-class neighbourhoods that will provide 'the mix necessary for social change and development' (Turner, 1967: p. 178). The fundamental difference however, lies in the cost of the two housing objects produced: given the land and secure tenure, the squatter, Turner argues, can build the same house as the government agency at half the cost. Self-employment can cut down on labour costs, but the greatest savings derive from the avoidance of finance and credit costs. The squatter encounters few overheads, he gets a higher productivity out of the labour he hires, he avoids indirect costs and fringe benefits, he
buys materials very cheaply, and there are no profits for others. Indeed he can himself obtain such profits if he subsequently decides to rent or sell the house.

(a) Critique

Now let us move on to some criticisms of this presentation. Capitalism is not typified by the production of commodities, as other modes of production also produce commodities – but it is typified by generalized commodity production which has as its end the valorization of capital. This simple fact does much to undermine the validity of Turner's analysis. The critical question then is whether the forms of production of the housing commodity can best be identified on the basis of user-control, and the system of construction of the housing object, or whether they can best be understood in terms of the different ways they assume this status as a commodity and valorize this capital.

Housing economy in Turner's view, is a function of the degree of heteronomy in its production and the legal framework that regulates this production. Because of this his concepts of 'popular' (self-help) and 'official' housing are falsely polarized. The cost of production of the one is low because of the structural and organizational features of its system of construction and the cost of production of the other is seen as a direct expression of top-heavy bureaucratic and technological structures abetted by a value-laden and costly set of legal housing norms and procedures. But is this the case? We have already seen how in the production of commodities under capitalism, use-values have to be mediated through exchange-values, and how the final cost of the house must be expressed in terms of how the capital it represents is valorized. It is thus fair to ask if the cost of production of a house, the level of effective demand and the size of the housing problem are determined by technology and its managerial and legal organization per se: or whether it is the articulation of these elements by the dominant capitalist mode of production that determines such considerations. This, of course, is a time-honoured argument and centres on the most important question that confronts students of the Third World: Can those problems that we are all so ready to identify in such societies be more correctly understood as properties of a specified mode of production, or as urban/industrial or technological problems per se?

Recently several writers have had occasion to remark on the ideological nature and explanatory inadequacy of the belief that cities can be studied 'in and for themselves', and that urbanization can be understood as a process independent of modes of production (Picketvance, 1976). Castells (1976a) has even attempted to demonstrate on a more profound level the conceptual improbability of the urban theoretical object and urban real object alike.

Such attempts to establish the 'urban' instance as autonomous have generally had more success when they have been integrated into a system of urban industrialism or where the technological character of industrialization is seen to be the principal determinant of the evolution of social forms, as for example in works of Aron (1967) and Dahrendorf (1959). There is little doubt that Turner (1976: p. 14) shares this perspective:

When reflecting on the horrors of an urban-industrial world or on the even more nightmarish consequences of managerial post-industrialism, we must remember that the mirage-like reflections seen by the world's population do in fact provide glimpses of a vastly higher material standard of living.

The ideological nature of analyses of this type has been correctly perceived by Glass (1955: p. 5) as a 'last protecting illusion in the crisis of our time, that it is not capitalism which is injuring us but the more isolable, more evident system of urban-industrialism'.

In urban studies there has always been a technologically deterministic literature and I fear that we are now being presented with a similar case for housing. The argument goes as follows: immense housing problems – why? Answer – because there are large-scale heteronomous hierarchies that waste resources (particularly energy), mismatch people's needs and are too costly. The solution? Small-scale systems that are cheap with small-scale technologies controlled by the users. It is therefore important to ask if it is the presence of centralized technology and bureaucratic hierarchy that determines the value of the housing commodity.

It is claimed by Turner that a squatter with a suitable building plot and secure tenure can build a house at under half the cost of a government agency house. But why does it cost half as much? We can admit with him that administrative costs have something to do with it, as do the interests of finance capital in mortgage and credit costs. But to this must also be added: the costs derived from the interests of industrial capital (through the monopoly building materials sector); the costs

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derived from the interests of landed and property capital (in high land and development costs); and, the profits involved in the complex systems of subcontracting of labour. The squat on the other hand minimizes the interests of finance and landed capital; he avoids building monopolies by making his own materials or by buying them from petty commodity sources and he uses cheap and unprotected labour. Not only has he eliminated many of these profits but he can in fact receive them if he sells or rents the house produced. Thus it is not the absence of a technocratic and bureaucratic system, or the legal housing norms, or the sequence of building operations that have cheapened his house — it is merely the fact that he is operating in a different sphere of circulation of capital — that covered by the petty commodity production of housing. He has not escaped capitalism; he is merely in another part of it.

We are now moving into a position where we can identify the real relationship between the two systems. Hierarchical, bureaucratic and technologically overloaded systems are merely expressions of the formal valorization of the capital involved — landed, finance, industrial and property capital. Autonomous systems on the other hand are the form that the petty commodity process of valorization of capital assumes. Given the fact that a precondition for the continued operation of the capitalist mode of production is the greater generalization of commodity production for exchange, it would be incorrect to assume that in terms of the production of the final housing object, these relationships are not fundamentally antagonistic, or that the conditions that exist in the one are not determined or dependent on those that exist in the other.

All this is vitally important for Turner's argument, because he locates the origins of the housing problem in the operations of a bureaucratically and technologically top-heavy system rather than in the operation of a specific mode of production. Despite Durkheim's warnings about the 'illusions of the evident', it would seem that we have arrived at the latest liberal illusion that it is not capitalism that is injuring the poor of the Third World but rather the more evident facts of hierarchy, bureaucracy and scale. It is also argued that if we return to localism, open systems, small-scale technology and decentralization then these excesses would disappear. The ideological ramifications of such a complete depoliticization of the issue will be discussed shortly.

This level of critique is of course that sustained by the intermediate technology and ecological schools of opposition to 'urban-industrialism'. Like these critics in other fields, Turner is at odds to show how the market-values of heteronomous systems fail to satisfy the human needs they ostensibly are there to cater for. In his analysis of housing he forcibly separates use-value from market-value and in the process of so doing mystifies both: market-values are seen as ratios of exchange that do not distribute use-values effectively, and use-values are seen as directly expressing certain human needs that exist outside of any ideological or historical mediation. The issue then does not become the specific interpenetration of use-value and exchange-value in the one commodity form, housing. On the contrary, it becomes the issue of use-value versus market-value enshrined in two falsely polarized and technologically-defined alternatives: the 'institutional' house produced by heteronomous systems in which market-values dominate, and the autonomous house in which use-values dominate.

The stage is then set for a quasi-radical and, even at times, moral crusade against all social, economic and political systems organized on the basis of heteronomy. Contemporary ideological differences disappear, as do the political struggles based on these differences, as they have no place in the language or understanding of this school of theoreticians. Capitalism and 'state socialism' are berated alike (Turner, 1976: p. 66). Both are understood in terms of their mutual heteronomy — both fail to match use-values and market-values and the origins of this mismatch are to be found in technology, bureaucracy and scale. The solution to housing problems in Third World, advanced capitalist (and presumably state socialist) countries lies in the replacement of large-scale, fossil-fuelled technology and its accompanying bureaucracy with small-scale, low-energy and labour-intensive technology that is self-governed.

It should have become apparent from all this that the whole debate between self-help and institutional housing policies (differentiated on the basis of technologically-dominated forms of social organization) is a debate that is clearly carried out within the perimeters of bourgeois ideology. Indeed it would seem to be yet another example of the way in which modern bourgeois social science has persistently attempted to understand housing and urban realities: through the evolution of partial, one-sided and falsely polarized categories and the reconstitution of this reality in terms of these false polarities. In this way the crude separation of use-value and exchange-value in theory becomes
the false opposition in practice between institutional and self-help housing. Such dichotomies are to the bourgeois treatment of the housing question as the dichotomies rural/urban, modern/traditional etc. are to the bourgeois treatment of the urban question.

It should be reiterated again, therefore, that Turner does not have an historical or social concept of use-values, nor an adequate understanding of commodity processes, and that he remains essentially at the level of appearance of the housing object. He therefore has to look to technology, bureaucracy and scale rather than to the status of housing as a commodity within a given social formation in order to explain housing problems. The destruction of bureaucracy, the reduction of scale and the limitation of advanced technology thus constitutes the basis of his solution to these problems. In other words the diagnosis is one that fervently attacks the symptoms in the conviction that these are the disease; and given the fact that Turner wants to move through policy to greater levels of autonomy and smaller-scale technology, he remains with that disease, i.e. a 'small is beautiful' capitalism with intermediate technology.

The opposition between self-help and institutional housing is based on the evident differences at the level of appearance of the housing object. However, these differences remain those of form rather than substance because the commodity status of both will remain as long as the capitalist mode of production remains. The use-value of both kinds of housing cannot escape the influence of this commodity character or be discussed outside of it — especially at the level of housing policy. It is worthwhile repeating therefore that a more adequate understanding of the housing object can only be arrived at through the recognition of the specific interpenetration of use- and exchange-value within each of a wide range of housing objects that can be produced within the capitalist mode of production — all of which necessarily assume the commodity form at some point in their production, consumption and exchange. Moreover, if we are to assess the real significance of alternative housing strategies, then we must analyse the way in which they articulate the interests of the various fractions of capital tied to their production, consumption and exchange.¹¹

(b) Towards an alternative framework

I do not have time to discuss what is really the critical issue behind the formation of 'heteronomous systems' — the increase in the organic composition of capital as a result of the centralization of capital. This signifies a change in the ratio of the means of production to labour power and of constant capital to variable capital, an increase in the productivity of labour and the reduction of the value of labour power in relation to the total value produced in the housing object. It is this process, which operates at the level of the mode of production, that is the essential kernel of the phenomena of bureaucracy, increased scale, hierarchy and use of technology. It determines the industrialization and monopolization of building systems and it occurs necessarily at the expense of small producers and 'autonomous' systems. It also provides a useful starting-point for an alternative framework for analysing housing and settlement processes.

The basis of such a framework has been laid in the work of Emilio Pradilla (1976: pp. 77–83). I would like to adapt the distinction he has made between industrialized, manufactured, and self-built forms of housing production in two ways: first, by expanding it from the level of the individual house to the level of the settlement; second, by identifying the relationship between the three 'forms' in terms of the relationship between the dominant capitalist mode of production and the dependent petty commodity form of production.¹²

According to this view, all housing objects are seen as being produced in terms of the functioning of a total system, and the relationship between the dominant capitalist mode of production, which produces the industrialized housing object, and the dependent petty commodity form which produces the manufactured and self-help forms.¹³ The conditions of dominance and dependence will vary both in time and place and will establish the differences between settlement types (government and private sector neighbourhoods, clandestine neighbourhoods, invasions etc.) and will also be important in the development or regression cycle within a settlement, where the specificity of this relationship can change over time.¹⁴ All this goes a long way from looking at housing in terms of a dualistic model (whether official/popular, formal/informal, or institutional/self-help) and moves towards a class rather than a technological analysis.

The industrialized form of the production of the housing commodity dominates all activities in the housing sector: its operations define the limits and the functions of the other forms. The relationship between the production and consumption of the industrialized housing object is carried out entirely through the mechanisms of
commercial exchange, and the relationship between the agents involved (e.g. workers, middlemen, financiers, landowners) and the housing object produced is established through the general conditions of the market rather than through personalistic clientage. Capital is invested according to the laws of capitalist accumulation and is directed towards the purchase of industrially-elaborated building materials, the acquisition of often sophisticated technology, and the payment of an often highly-differentiated labour force. The domination of constant capital over variable capital brings about high labour productivity. The final product assumes an industrialized and standardized form, and the process of exchange is mediated through formal intermediaries (e.g. estate agents).

The domination of the industrialized form of housing production over housing production in general is established in one or more of three areas: in the exclusive allocation of national and urban housing budgets to the provision of finished housing objects; through the domination of an industrialized building materials industry based on large national or foreign monopolies controlling the production of cement, iron, bricks, prefabricated roofing, sanitary and structural components, glass etc.; and through the supply of lands by large property companies dominated by state and finance capital. This domination is maintained through the monopoly control of essential building components, the accelerated valorization of urban lands, and through the mechanisms of unequal exchange. Monopoly interests are often articulated through the State. The survival of the manufactured and local forms of building materials production with higher costs of production allows the prices of materials from the industrialized sector to be determined at these levels. This results in extra profits that facilitate monopolization and the disappearance of the more backward forms.16

The petty commodity production of the housing object assumes two forms – the self-built form and the manufactured form, and these are more or less the equivalent of Gerry's (1975) distinction between traditional and modern artisans – the one producing primarily for use-value and the other for exchange-value, though in an important sense this distinction is being eroded.17 The differences between them relate specifically to the increased differentiation of the work-force, the more generalized use of wage-labour, and the increased significance of the means of production.18

In the manufactured petty commodity form, housing production is realized by social agents who are different to those who consume the final housing object. This production involves a small number of paid workers under the direction of an architect or builder who manages these activities in the name of an individual owner of capital. The labour force, which has an important element of differentiation in skills, is often obtained through complex systems of subcontracting. Raw materials show a rudimentary degree of standardization and are obtained from local manufacture of building materials, with certain critical and luxury elements coming from industrialized sources. A limited quantity of machinery is used. The final product is consumed by middle and upper income groups, but the low organic composition of capital and low levels of labour productivity limit the capacity of the manufactured housing sector to expand.

Dependence on the industrialized building form is exercised through lack of access to capital and sophisticated technology and reliance on commercial and industrialized building materials. The continued survival of the manufactured form is very much a function of the low wage-levels that are made possible through the existence of an industrial reserve army, of restrictions on the importation of machinery to the industrialized form because of foreign exchange difficulties, and of the persistence of certain ideological values attached to the individualized housing object.19 In the allied building materials sector there is the rudimentary elaboration of building components (wooden and iron parts, brickmaking etc.) in which wage-labour, extended-family or cooperative labour can prevail. In the supply of lands, purchase can be made through individual owners or through formal supply mechanisms, but there is a significant component of clandestine illegal land division by small- and medium-scale land speculators.

In the self-help form of petty commodity housing production, the producer and the consumer are one and the same. Construction is undertaken with income-derived capital on the basis of personal labour time, and with high levels of free and kin-related labour. There can be important additions of paid, skilled labour for specialized jobs. Construction materials are generally re-cycled throwaways which are valorized through the labour inputs. It should be pointed out, however, that there is an increasing tendency for even these rudimentary materials to be commercially valorized (e.g. bamboo, bitumen-covered cardboard, and even waste-paper, wood and tin cans). There is also an
increasing use of wage-labour, and at a later stage of construction there are often heavy purchases of manufactured building materials. Profit can be extracted from the subsequent sale or rental of the house and part of the value produced by these labours can be realized by others in the appreciation of neighbouring land values. Rates of construction depend greatly on the amount of disposable income, on the ability to prolong the working day, and on the ability to cut down on other subsistence needs (particularly food and fuel). The construction involves rudimentary technology, large quantities of labour, and traditional techniques. In its pure form there is no real capitalist investment as the money capital only peripherally enters into relation with wage-labour and the housing object is produced for self-consumption and not for exchange, though this status as a potential commodity can be altered by bringing the house as a commodity onto the market for sale or rental.

The survival of the self-help form ultimately derives from the conditions of under-valorization of labour endemic to Third World capitalist development, and from the ineluctable necessity of low-income groups for some form of shelter. Insofar as housing is necessary for the maintenance and expanded reproduction of social labour, the dominant capitalist mode of production is satisfied to allow the self-production of such activities, particularly when the absence of rents and the association of such housing with various forms of subsistence activities that extend family budgets, will mean less pressure for wage increases.

It should be noted that the production of building materials that accompanies the petty commodity production of housing is often dominated by archaic and pre-capitalist conditions of the worst sort, with strong kin-based work relations and traditional techniques, but these too have strong linkages with the modern capitalist sector through recycling activities. In terms of supply of lands the traditional form is invasion, but even here the penetration of commodity relations in land has developed through illegal land subdivision and allocation. It should also be pointed out that such pre-capitalist processes of self-improvement of land do not escape the system: they themselves produce new ground-rents and these are subject to the operations of the state and the market. The capitalist development of urban land then not only determines the appearance of invasions, but also indirectly controls the process of valorization occurring within them.

4. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:
THE STATE AND THE PLANNER

Turner's inability to see how the housing process functions in the valorization of capital and the interests of the various fractions of capital tied to this process, blinds him to many realities that are of vital importance in understanding the production of housing commodities particularly to the struggles of these various fractions at the level of the state. Almost all of Turner's work has been written in the context of policy recommendations and though there has been some change in his position, it has remained remarkably constant over the past 15 years or so. For the sake of clarity it is worthwhile stating those policy recommendations that he developed for Latin America and then going on to deal with his present analysis of what is required by way of policy.

In the early 1960s, Turner argued that the processes of uncontrolled urban growth in Latin America represented a serious problem to government if not to those responsible for the uncontrolled urban expansion. Squatting and illegal urban growth were a demonstration of the limitations of existing planning machinery, and current housing policies and legislation seriously restricted government influence over urban issues. These policies were based on the age-old attitude that slums and squatter settlements were diseases of the urban structure. Government policy was based on the eradication of slums and squatter settlements and the rehousing of their inhabitants and the elimination of overall housing deficits through the construction of houses that strictly conformed to modern minimum standards.

Turner proceeded to demonstrate that the 'well-intentioned' housing projects that governments provided for low-income families were not only 'costly, rigid, stultifying and depressing' (Turner, 1967: p. 121) for their users but they could only house a relatively prosperous minority at the expense of the majority. He argued constantly against these policies because they were founded on 'the ignorance and misunderstanding of the housing and settlement process', and because they represented an application of planning and housing concepts based on the experience of 'modernized' countries. Thus, he argued (1968: p. 354):

The ineffectiveness of contemporary urban planning and the relatively low income housing policies in developing areas is . . . mainly due to the ignorance of residential needs and priorities and to the
Moreover, he suggested that such policies actively contributed to the growing chaos and loss of administrative control over urban growth. The housing and planning problems were the result of the restriction and waste of resources and investments that came about through the attempted imposition of industrial and middle-class standards on the urban population. They led directly to massive squatting and the bankruptcy of official ‘low-cost’ housing projects. They also led to an ‘historically unprecedented politically and economically dangerous loss of control over the major parts of economic growth’ (Turner, 1968: p. 354).

Only when policy-makers gave consideration to people’s different situations and housing needs could urban development be brought about in an orderly and economic fashion. The only real choice that confronted such governments was either the acceptance of massivel overcrowding and squatter settlement growth and the waste of resources through costly public works programmes, or the restructuring of development through cooperation with the people by mobilizing their savings and initiative: ‘they should not attempt to substitute for local direct action but should support it in ways that bring it into the institutional framework of the Nation’ (Turner, 1969: p. 512). Such a programme would be based on an ‘open housing service network’ which provided the service complementing action to the progressive development procedures that the people themselves preferred as it was only these procedures that gave access to appropriate residential locations and tenure in accordance with the changing demands of different social sectors. The modern minimum standard concept acted as a barrier to development and had to be replaced by concepts using standards as guides towards the progressive achievement of minimum goals (Turner, 1976). The best results, Turner argued, were obtained by the user when he was in full control of the design, construction and the management of his own house; whether he built it himself was only of secondary importance.

Turner has more recently reformulated the central issue as: ‘whose participation, in whose decisions and whose actions’? (Turner, 1976: p. 139). All housing requires tools, materials, skills and finance, and the effective assembly of these basic necessities can only be achieved through ‘three principles for planning’ (Turner, 1976: p. 155). First, the principle of self-government in housing suggests the replacement of centrally administered systems with a ‘multiplicity of locally self-governing sub-systems’ in which the principle of local and personal freedom to build is upheld. Second, the principle of appropriate technologies states that the effective use of local resources depends on tools which are highly flexible, lightweight and have low energy requirements. Such tools facilitate a high degree of managerial decentralization. Third, the issue of local de facto control of housing resources, and that of centrally-held authority resolves itself in the principle of planning through limits. There should be prescriptive rather than prescriptive planning legislation; the former sets limits to what people and local enterprises may do; the latter sets lines they must follow. It is only through centrally guaranteed access and centrally decided limits to private action that equitable access to resources can be maintained.

The realization of these three principles Turner argued, by allowing local control through government-guaranteed access to resources, can bring about the improvement of housing conditions and the control of urban development. The patterns of authority that result from these three principles are exactly the reverse of those at present carried out in Third World housing projects. In the autonomous system: the local level exercises control over the design, construction and management of dwellings and settlement, and the assembly of land, infrastructure, dwellings and services; the municipal level provides infrastructure and services; and the central government is concerned with the provision of equal access to, and the planning and management of, essential resources (e.g. building materials such as cement, land and the provision of credit and finance). In the heteronomous system the central government’s role is the provision of dwelling environments with land and finance largely controlled by the private sector. Turner points out that it is the mismatching of levels of authority with housing activities that is responsible for the deleterious effects of heteronomous systems. Such systems inevitably substitute for activities that are traditionally controlled locally and as a consequence they enrich the better-off, the sponsors at the expense of the needy, and they destroy local communities. They also work in favour of commercial or state socialist interests (Turner, 1976: p. 66). Turner argues that large organizations should have little interest in the construction or management of dwellings. Instead ‘they should be doing a great deal more business installing infrastructure and manufacturing, and supplying tools and materials that people and their own small enterprises can use locally’ (Turner, 1976: p. 123).
It is worthwhile stating by way of conclusion what Turner’s policy recommendations are and what they are not:

(1) He is not recommending the current practices of self-help building in Third World societies: ‘The current practices of literal self-help homebuilding by undernourished and overworked people without credit, with inadequate tools and poor materials is not presented here as a model. Many have accused Mangin, myself and others of romanticizing the truly hard conditions of ordinary people in most world cities because they fail to differentiate between the practices we describe and the principles we perceive’ (Turner, 1976: p. 127).

(2) He is not talking merely about self-built housing: ‘Even readers of Freedom to Build tend to assume that my co-authors and I are writing about ‘self-help’ in the narrow and literal sense of do-it-yourself building and so relegate the basic principles of dweller-control to a special corner or sector of the housing system’ (Turner, 1976: p. 128).

(3) He is not talking about the complete replacement of heteronomous systems: ‘As pointed out in Freedom to Build the obligation to build your house could be as oppressive as being forbidden to do so – the corollary of the freedom to build your house is the freedom not to have to!’ (Turner, 1976: p. 128).

(4) He is not talking about complete autonomy. Autonomy is everywhere constrained by access to resources which is controlled by the state: ‘While local control over necessarily diverse personal and local goods and services such as housing is essential, local control depends on personal and local access to resources which only central government can guarantee’ (Turner, 1976: p. 6).

(5) He is not talking about complete destruction of high energy technology, management and science: ‘In general modern systems must be disaggregated not destroyed. To suppose that the principles of loose-fit, low-energy and small-scale exclude modern management, science and technology is as absurd as to suppose that long-life can only be achieved with pre-industrial tools and techniques . . . There is plenty of room for debate over the extent to which central administration is in fact necessary for specific components of infrastructure, such as the generation and distribution of electric power or the manufacture of cement’ (Turner, 1976: p. 123).

What then is Turner recommending?

(1) Legislative controls limiting the concentration of resources and facilitating the supply of land, technology and credit to low-income groups.

(2) The modification of existing legislation on minimum standards and building procedures.

(3) The introduction of legislation and planning practices that set limits rather than procedural lines for housing activity.

(4) The legalization of tenure of land and dwellings now illegally occupied by squatters.

(5) The clear separation of various levels of authority in housing activities and the restriction of central government and municipal influence to certain well-defined and basic functions.

(a) Critique

It is perhaps worthwhile prefacing a detailed critique of these policies with some general observations of Turner’s overall concept of the role of the state and the planner. In Turner’s work, as indeed in that of most of the writers of the Intermediate Technology School, one is immediately struck by the contradiction between the way in which he recommends economic and technical changes of a draconian nature with an almost regal flourish of the pen: and yet at the same time he is unwilling to contemplate any radical change in the political system. These political systems are taken as a constant element in all his analyses. Moreover, in the same way as the housing problem was depoliticized by being conceived in terms of natural, spatial and technical data (e.g. technology, scale and energy) and less in terms of political, economic and social data, so too is the concept of the state which informs his work, deprived of any ‘real’ content: class contradictions and interests are either denied or considered of little relevance. Imperialism does not exist. The political and the planning processes are seen in a highly personalized way: politics is the business of politicians, planning the business of planners who after a great deal of moral exhortation are expected to carry out their responsibilities (Turner, 1972: p. 122).
The depoliticization of the housing question is a hallmark of Turner’s work. Class struggle over the use and accessibility of housing is ignored or denied. Thus differences in access to housing goods and services are not seen as the effect of the irrational organization of the market by the capitalist mode of production but rather as the effect of heteronomy, bureaucracy and scale. Social segregation of the urban habitat is similarly explained (Turner, 1976: p. 46).

Thus on the neighbourhood level there is nowhere in Turner’s writings an analysis of the organization of invasion movements and settlements by institutionalized political forces; nor is there any reference to the penetration of squatter organizations by institutional forces whose specific purpose is to defuse revolt. There is little on the critical role of political paternalism and fractional infighting in the provision of the necessary services, legality and freedom from police interference which are the prerequisites of a successful invasion. There is little on the cynical manipulation of squatter groups for vote-catching purposes, land-grabbing or financial gain — nothing on how the state and the institutions that are so ‘misinformed’ about the squatters’ intentions can so successfully manipulate them for their own particular ends. It will be seen that such omissions are hardly fortuitous — they reveal the ideological limits of Turner’s opposition to existing housing policies and must also be seen in the context of his proposal for yet another form of capitalist development.

The same thing happens on the urban level, with his historical settlement model of the Latin American city (Turner, 1968). The effect of urban policy on the structure of the Latin American city is seen as an independent variable and a distortion of the model. This is very dubious because a settlement model that is adequate to the Latin American reality must be able to conceptually unite the activities of the State and other interests involved in the housing and settlement process, for these are not distortions but rather integral processes in the evolution of the Latin American urban structure. Castells argues that technical and social change leads to an increased significance of political interventions. He adds:

This does not mean that society is becoming more ‘voluntaristic’ but simply that the dominant instance is shifting towards the political as the State progressively becomes not only the centre but the driving force of a social formation whose complexity requires centralized decision-making and control of processes (Castells, 1976b: p. 80).

He argues that because of this the ‘State becomes through its arrangement of space the real manager of everyday life’ but that this also leads to the politicization of urban movements.

Several things follow from this: first, the shift in emphasis from social reform by political debate between social groups, to urban planning by technocrats in the context of centralized decision-making processes may well be the real content of those phenomena that Turner is criticizing but never really penetrates. Secondly, the very idea of setting up governmental self-help programmes can perhaps be best understood as an expression of the now important role of the State as the ‘real manager of everyday life’. Thirdly, the increasing intervention of the State into urban affairs and the politicization of urban movements renders even more inadequate those analyses that are purged of a political dimension and that ‘are based on the perspective of social integration and the adaptation of migrants of rural origins to the urban culture of modern society’ (Castells, 1974: p. 7). The ideological character of analyses of the Turner type has been well stated by Pradilla (1974: pp. 3–4):

Here as always social practice denies any validity to technical or academic scientific studies ideologically qualified as apolitical, and it shows us that any analysis of a concrete reality which claims scientific character is necessarily a political analysis. We would be ostriches and would fall into the trap of our own academic ideology or even worse would become the useful fools and instruments of the established power if we were to remain in the field of technology for a self-styled ‘neutral social science’ at the same time as the State, the political parties, and the social classes they represent were considering the urban problem as a political problem [my translation].

Having successfully depoliticized the housing problem by analysing it in terms of a technological rather than class analysis; and having successfully depoliticized the State by failing to identify the political forces that move in it, and the class interests they represent, the ground is now cleared for a set of policy recommendations which are offered in a spirit of informed common sense and moral decency, which will be implemented in a peaceful liberal fashion, will endanger no interests or privileges and which will demand no fundamental changes in the social, economic and political system. Moral appeals are made to the State to intervene on the side of reform and technological rationality in the spirit of the common good and within the general ideological concept of the State as a manifestation of the general interest.
At this point Turner gets himself into considerable difficulty. He argues that the central authorities should guarantee access to land, finance and technical resources, but these as he admits himself are in the hands of private, commercial and financial interests. It therefore becomes the function of the State to legislate against these interests and allow local access to these resources. However his inability to see how the housing process functions in the valorization of capital and his failure to identify the various fractions of capital tied to this process, inevitably blind him to the struggles of these various fractions at the level of the State.

We cannot conceive of the State and the law outside of the context of the maintenance of the general conditions for the reproduction of capital. Therefore, when Turner argues that the State should intervene to guarantee local access to raw materials, finances and land, does he seriously expect that the interests of industrial, financial, landed and property capital are going to legislate against themselves? We are also left with a fundamental contradiction: that the State which is 'par excellence' an example of all those features that Turner isolates as the source of the housing problem -- hierarchy, bureaucracy, large scale, centralization, anonymity, etc. -- rather than being a target for his criticisms is in fact reserved the role of bringing about and administering something it should have very little control over! 'While local control over necessarily diverse personal and local goods and services -- such as housing -- is essential, local control depends on personal and local access to resources which only central government can guarantee' (Turner, 1976: p. 6). (my emphasis)

The source of this confusion ultimately lies in the essentially anarchist concept of the State to which Turner subscribes. Power and authority are essentially autonomous and universal features above and beyond the determination of specific class forces. It is this position that allows him to identify the source of housing problems in the mismatching of levels of authority with housing activities. It should also be pointed out that Turner is essentially talking about restricting the State to the administration of things (users decide, sponsors provide), a time-honoured tenet of the anarchist litany. What he seems to have forgotten, however, is that most anarchists would only regard this as feasible as a post-revolutionary condition.

Given the fact that Turner fails to see the housing problem as a structural condition of the capitalist mode of production, it is hardly surprising that he explains the deficiencies of State housing and urban policies by moralizing that they are the result of 'failure of communication' and the 'ignorance of popular housing needs' (Turner, 1968: p. 354; 1969: p. 525) or because those who perpetrate them have 'confused their values and lost the common sense of life's wholeness' (Turner, 1976: p. 62). But the intervention of the State into such a critical area cannot be understood by contrasting popular housing needs with the moral turpitude of planners, architects or bureaucrats, or even indeed with the wickedness of capitalists. It is perhaps more appropriate to look at the State's intervention into the housing process:

1. In terms of the structural limits to the solution of the housing problem, given the persistence of the capitalist mode of production.
2. In terms of the political forces that it expresses, the social classes it represents and the interests it defends.

That is to say that its actions should be seen as the rational expression of the process of valorization of capital for the various fractions of capital tied to housing, land and urban development rather than the misinformed, ignorant and irrational expression of incompetent bureaucracies. After all is it failure of communication and ignorance of people's needs that motivates the State to throw food in the sea in the widespread presence of hunger? Is it in other words capitalist production for profit rather than social production for need that explains these activities? The same logic also applies, as we shall see shortly, to the State's attitude to housing norms: the question 'why give more?' maintains the illusion of good sense until it is rephrased 'why sell less?'

The recognition of the concrete interests of capital tied to the various State housing policies would lead us immediately into a discussion of the way in which these various policies express the interests of these various fractions of capital and the conflicts between them. Lack of space prevents such a discussion, but suffice it to say that it is such struggles, rather than the need to educate or the success of moral exhortation, that will determine the ultimate acceptance or rejection of self-help housing policies.

Finally, Turner argues that an adequate housing solution for low-income groups can only come about by assembling the necessary elements for housing (technology, land, finance, materials) within an autonomous system. However, 'in general', the accessibility of these basic resources is 'a function of law and its administration' and these in turn are func-
tions of central authority' (Turner, 1976: p. 17) (my emphasis). This clearly is untenable — the accessibility and availability of tools, materials, land and finance are not functions of the State, law, administration or central authority, but are functions of the capitalist market. The intervention of the State and the law must be seen in the context of the maintenance and regulation of the general conditions for the reproduction of capital. Under no circumstances can they transcend capitalist relations of production, consumption and exchange, nor can they alter the fundamental laws of development of the capitalist mode of production. Engels encountered the same basic flaw in Proudhonist solutions to the housing problem — the attempt to interpret economic conditions as a function of legality. It is worthwhile quoting his critique of Proudhon's attempt to legislate the rate of interest to 1% because of its uncanny relevance to Turner's argument that access to resources is a function of law and its administration:

Proudhon from his legal standpoint explains the rate of interest, as he does all economic facts, not by the conditions of social production, but by the State laws in which these conditions receive their general expression. From this point of view which lacks any inkling of the interconnection between the State laws and the conditions of production in society, these State laws necessarily appear as purely arbitrary orders which at any moment could be replaced just as well by their exact opposites. Nothing is easier therefore for Proudhon than to issue a decree — as soon as he has the power to do so — reducing the rate of interest to 1%. And if all the other social conditions remain as they were, this Proudhonist decree will simply exist on paper only. The rate of interest will continue to be governed by the economic laws to which it is subject today, all decrees notwithstanding. (Engels, 1872: p. 34).

Engels goes on to justify this argument by referring to the way in which during the early history of capitalism, the constant circumvention of the old usury laws forced the State to 'admit its impotence against the laws of social production' (Engels, 1872: p. 35). The constant breaches of minimum housing standards by low-income settlers are a good instance of the inability of the State to impose essentially unworkable principles in Third World housing. Even if laws allowing equitable access to resources could be passed by the State in the fashion that Turner advocates, there would be little doubt that they would go the same way as the laws against usury precisely because the fundamental structures responsible for the lack of access to such resources have remained untouched.

Let us look now in some detail at Turner's recommendations, for we shall see that these recommendations in no way get to the heart of the housing problem. Indeed not only do they not get beyond the capitalist mode of production, but there are also plenty of grounds for the belief that such policies may allow those very processes responsible for the housing shortages to return with a vengeance. There are plenty of grounds for the belief that current strategies for self-help housing can be looked upon, in the most charitable view, as an easy way of facilitating the capital valorization of huge areas of land, property and finance in an area where previously there were severe blockages and bottlenecks. In other words contemporary theories of self-help housing have inbuilt both in their principles and in their consequences a set of values that rationalize material interests, that stand in direct contradiction to the moral tone they frequently adopt.

5. LAND, PRIVATE PROPERTY AND THE LAW

First, let us take the problem of land. One of Turner's principal recommendations following his long Latin American experience was the legalization of tenure of land and dwellings now illegally occupied by squatters. Let us see where this would get the squatter.

If the State post-facto legalizes an invasion by granting tenure, it will merely facilitate the penetration of commodity relations in land, where hitherto they either did not exist or where they were underdeveloped (precisely because they were illegal). If it legalizes such lands before possession, it will merely allow for the market valuation of these lands, which otherwise would have been invaded or bought illegally (at lower prices). In both instances the intervention of the State which Turner argues as the principal policy necessity has facilitated the penetration of the commodity form in land. There are many reasons why the State would do this but the interest of the squatter would hardly be the decisive one. Indeed in all these instances it is difficult to see how the squatter would benefit unless the State intervened in the extremely difficult process of regulating market prices in peripheral land — something that Turner does not refer to. And even if such controls were implemented it would be doubtful if they could be maintained given the unfettered operation of the land market elsewhere in the city. Not only would such proposals involve a political struggle of titanic
proportions against the various fractions of capital tied to the lucrative business of urban land speculation and development, but one only has to look at the size of the black market, and the illegal sale and subletting of government-subsidized housing to see that the State is powerless in situations where it tries to go against 'the laws of social production'.

At this point it is worthwhile pointing out the crucial significance of private property in land and dwellings to Turner's argument. His Latin American work was always an attempt to persuade those in power that it was not only in the squatter's interest but in their own interest to act on his recommendations:

Rather than being a ‘misery-belt of the dispossessed waiting only for that revolutionary spark to drive them to the destruction of the citadels of society which they surround’... the settlements could be more accurately described as social safety-belts. Kill the hope though and the situation may well change (Turner, 1969: p. 528).

It is interesting to speculate over what makes these peripheral shantytowns 'social safety-belts'.

As long as urbanization and modernization are progressing, the slums and the settlements of the cities involved, are in Stokes' terms 'slums of hope' rather than 'despair'. But this will remain true only as long as the settlements are vehicles of social change and change for the better. As soon as they become traps like the infamous ghettos of the more stable societies, then they become the breeding ground of discontent and violence that all squatter settlements are supposed to be (Turner, 1969: p. 528).

Of course, the whole idea of the inability to define slums in terms of material standards, though basically correct, is in turn weakened by his own inability to pursue the argument in terms of concepts such as class and relative deprivation. Be that as it may, when we look at what makes peripheral shantytowns 'slums of hope' we return to a fundamental ideological position — the private ownership of land and property, or rather the prospect of it. One of Turner's fundamental beliefs is the effect of legal security of tenure on the development prospects of a house and one of his most immediate policy recommendations is to grant such legality to those who do not have it. As we shall see, this demand, despite its apparent simplicity, is indeed a complex and difficult one for a society dominated by the capitalist mode of production to concede to. The idea that the introduction of private property in land and housing has a salutary effect on the housing problem is not a new one. In the Housing Question. Engels (1872: pp. 31–33) conducts a furious onslaught on the work of the anarchist Sax over precisely this point: that the housing problem can be solved only by transferring property in dwellings to workers. There are remarkable similarities between Sax's ideas on the merits of private property and Turner's arguments in favour of legalization of squatter land.

Whether Turner remains conscious of this ideological element in his work remains an open but somewhat irrelevant question given the great interest being shown in self-help housing by government, State and international agencies. Historically speaking, as La Emancipación, the Spanish Republican newspaper, remarked over one hundred years ago: 'the cleverest leaders of the ruling class have always directed their efforts towards increasing the number of small property owners in order to build an army for themselves against the proletariat'. All of these organizations have rationalized their interest in self-help solutions with the most humanitarian and liberal of arguments. It is worthwhile asking therefore, given the nature of this rhetoric, why there has been absolutely no interest shown in alternative housing strategies for that sector of the population who undoubtedly suffer from the worst housing conditions — 'low-income tenants'. The ideological and material impact of private property on the social responsibilities of squatter settlers (fictitious though it may be) could give a clue, as does the unwillingness of planners to intervene on behalf of low-income groups in those instances where crucial class conflicts arise over the use of inner-city land.

Though it is undoubtedly true that private ownership of land does have a marked effect on rates of construction in peripheral squatter settlements, a comparison between self-help projects based on single family units of production, and those based on cooperative neighbourhood-level organization shows that these high rates of physical development can only be achieved unevenly and often at the expense of neighbouring construction. It also has profound effects on the growth of social inequality, and stunts the collective consciousness necessary for obtaining subsequent improvements in infrastructure and services.

More recently Turner has recommended legislation against the concentration of ownership of urban land, and government-guaranteed access to land by low-income groups. But how is this to be achieved? 'In the case of land this principle suggests community trusteeship within national law, rather than the nationalization in the sense of direct public ownership as an
alternative to the commercialization of land' (Turner, 1976: p. 116). Turner then is postulating a system of localized trusteeship which is an up-to-date version of systems common throughout the pre-industrial world in which only the use of land can be owned. Rights to such an assignment of usufruct are invested in the local community' (Turner, 1976: p. 116). This in many respects is an even more implausible solution to the land problem. First, there is little evidence that under existing conditions of capitalism in the Third World, the State will fight the massive interests tied to land speculation in the name of the general interest. Second, there is little evidence that the state would or even could foot the bill for the immense compensation costs for appropriated property that such legislation would entail. Third, legislation limiting the concentration of resources already exists on the statute books of many capitalist countries, yet everywhere it seems to gather dust or prove impotent in the face of the continuing monopolization of productive resources typical of capitalist development. Let us assume, nonetheless, that such a policy could be carried out. How far would it go towards solving or mitigating the housing problem? It should be said immediately that from the squatter's point of view the difference between the nationalization of land and locally controlled usufruct is a complete irrelevance as long as the capitalist mode of production remains intact. In neither instance do they get beyond the structural determination of the housing problem.

We can agree with Turner that land nationalization is no solution to the housing problem, albeit for very different reasons. He argues that there is no difference between centralized market-values and State-productivity values (i.e. both are a function of bureaucracy, hierarchy and scale). Marx, on the other hand, argued that nationalization would not involve the abolition of that part of the worker's wage at present paid in the form of ground-rent to the landowner, but rather its transference to the factory-owner. This is because every reduction in the cost of reproduction of labour power would lead to a depression in the value of labour power and a corresponding drop in wages (i.e. what was once paid in the form of money to the landowner would now be paid in the form of unpaid labour to the factory-owner).

It is very difficult to see how locally controlled forms of usufruct of land could avoid exactly the same fate. Moreover given the highly unlikely prospect that such schemes could be implemented, it is impossible to see how they could be insulated from the effects of the market valuation of lands elsewhere in the city without the State regulation of market prices both in peripheral urban lands and the inner-city areas. The benefits of granting rights of usufruct in peripheral urban land could almost certainly only be guaranteed by the nationalization of inner-city land, given the significance of such areas for the determination of land values in the whole urban area and the sheer impossibility of introducing locally controlled rights of usufruct in these inner city areas. This, however, is a course of action that Turner specifically rejects precisely because it would increase, in his own terms, the power of heteronomous organizations over society. It would thus seem that locally controlled rights of usufruct would be unable to prevent the penetration of commodity relations in land.

Finally, despite Turner's protestations to the contrary, such a scheme is nothing less than a reactionary attempt to revive pre-capitalist forms of land tenure, and as such is a reflection of the anti-urban, anti-industrial bias typical of most writers of the Intermediate Technology School. Such views however fail completely in their attempts to explain how capitalism can reverse the whole basis of its historical development – a precondition of which has been and continues to be the destruction of such pre-capitalist forms. As they are unable to explain the rationale behind the destruction of these pre-capitalist structures, one is entitled to a certain degree of scepticism over the ability of these theorists to revive them – especially when the principal elements of the capitalist mode of production remain intact. As Marx once pointed out:

Don Quixote long ago paid the penalty for wrongly imagining that knight-errantry was compatible with the existing economic forms of society (Marx, 1867: pp. 87–88).

6. FINANCE, MATERIALS AND THE INFORMAL SECTOR

We can trace exactly the same contradictions in all of Turner's recommendations for the passage of legislation that guarantees access to resources to low-income groups. Thus in the
PETTY COMMODITY HOUSING OR DWELLER CONTROL?

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require to resources. However, to be truly effective, the legislators would have to enter the 'no-go' areas of economic self-interest and industrial relations (my emphasis) (Turner, 1976: p. 125).

There is a clear inference here that, as in all his other recommendations, Turner is taking us to the brink of a critical intervention, only to show us that it is not possible.

7. MINIMUM STANDARDS, PRESCRIPTIVE VERSUS PROSCRIPTIVE LEGISLATION

No one can doubt the inherent good sense in Turner's criticisms of modern minimum standards and official housing policies. There is absolutely no doubt that official restrictions controlling the production, consumption and exchange of housing can lead to serious diseconomies on the level of the city, the settlement and the dwelling, and that ultimately they derive from a middle-class sense of what is permissible (Turner, 1968: p. 355).

Having said this, it must also be stressed that his position on minimum standards is overly voluntaristic, and nowhere in his work does he attempt to relate such practices, codes and legislation to the interests they articulate. Because he fails to see this connection he fails to identify the real content of such legislation and it is hardly surprising therefore that he ends up somewhat perplexed by the strength of resistance that is provoked by any attempt to change this legislation.

If governments cannot or will not make up the difference between what housing laws require and what the effective demand can purchase, then why do they create these problems? Why is the common sense solution of allowing and encouraging people to make the best use of what they have, treated as subversive nonsense by the technocratic and bureaucratic authorities? (Turner and Fichter, 1972: p. 150).

Why indeed? First of all, as is well known, minimum standards have always been used as a method of reinforcing the class segregation of the urban habitat, an element that is entirely ignored in Turner's work. Some of the diseconomies that are attributed to these 'norms' per se can be more correctly regarded as expressions of the unequal organization of urban space. As this is a fundamental expression of, and mechanism for, the reproduction of the social formation, it is difficult to see how any attempt to legislate universal housing norms on the basis of setting lines for the progressive realization of minimum goals would eradicate these irrationalities — which remain far more intractable precisely because they...
remain at the level of the social formation (e.g. income command over space).

When we look in detail at minimum standards legislation we find that it is of two types. First, there are rules that are designed to facilitate the dominance of the industrialized form of housing production in the context of certain middle class ideologies that are attached to the finished housing object (provision of services, functional design, availability of green space, internal services, shared living room/dining room, acceptable densities etc.). Second, there are a set of rules imposed by the State in the interest of the ruling class as a whole, that are designed to bring about a spatial organization that facilitates the circulation of capital and commodities and which limits the anarchy inherent in uncontrolled capitalist urbanization (e.g. legislation on public health, sanitation, densities, water supplies, schools, hospitals, transport facilities etc.).

In the first instance, such legislation can be seen as a body of regulations that fortifies but does not determine the dominance of industrial housing production, and therefore many of the features that Turner identifies as a consequence of these regulations are in fact either effects of this dominance or properties of the industrialized building form itself. Thus features such as inadequacies of design, standardization of housing and settlements, limitations on living space, inability to use small plots of land, the sequence of building operations and the provision of services, have their origins in the use of industrialized building materials, prefabricated systems, industrialized building systems, high land values and so on. It also lies in the ideology that governs both the middle class image of the finished housing object and the schools of design whose purpose it is to rationalize the needs of this form of housing production (Pradilla and Jimenez, 1973). There is little evidence to suggest, therefore, that a change in the legislation on modern minimum standards in itself will interfere either with these conditions or with the overall dominance that this form of production exercises over total housing production. This dominance is rooted at the level of the capitalist mode of production inasmuch as the production of the industrialized housing object ensures the maximum reproduction of capital by the various fractions of capital involved. It exercises its dominance over the dependent petty commodity forms producing manufactured and self-help housing, only peripherally through legal regulations. The waste and diseconomy of what is produced by the industrialized building form is therefore not merely a function of "irrational" legislation but rather a function of "rational" production for profit.

In the second instance, the idea that existing legislation on housing and urban norms is in a large measure responsible for the 'housing problem' not only distracts attention away from the structural determination of this problem at the level of the capitalist mode of production, but also obscures the overall function of this legislation in regulating urban growth in favour of the maintenance and reproduction of the social formation. The fact remains that in most Third World societies, minimum standards legislation has had only an indirect effect on the building activities of low-income groups who have largely ignored or circumvented it (as incidentally has a lot of private and even public construction). Thus, the industrialized building form would continue to dominate the organization of residential space, even if changes were made to reduce or abolish minimum housing standards. Moreover public housing has only exceptionally been provided for the lowest income groups: in most Third World societies over three-quarters of the population lies below the income threshold that allows qualification for the housing lists.

The real issue then is what effect would the relaxation of such standards have on the satisfaction of such needs. The answer would seem to be very little – because only a small proportion of the total costs of such housing is attributable to the effects of building legislation. Turner argues of course that it would encourage the construction activities of the 'popular sector'. At the same time however, it would also encourage the numerous forms of cheating, bribery, speculation, overcharging and monopoly pricing that the urban poor now suffer from in these societies.

Few can deny that minimum standards in Third World contexts are implemented to protect the quality, status and privileges of middle class dwellings and settlements, and that they are often used to the detriment of low-income groups (e.g. to justify eradication, or the denial of public services etc.). But it is very difficult to follow an argument that says such controls should be relaxed, for low-income groups have exactly the same rights to freedom from exploitation and decent housing conditions as upper- and middle-income groups. As Turner's recommendations stand at present, the de facto duality of standards between what is permissible for middle- and upper-income groups and what is permissible for low-income groups would merely be sanctified by law. What in
effect is needed is a set of provisions that apply equally to all, precisely because all groups in society have equal rights to adequate housing built according to a set of standards that guarantee security for mind, body and soul. This suggests not less controls but controls of a different kind: controls on rent and speculative landlordism; prosecution of the whole range of speculative developers, loan sharks and cheats who daily thrive off the shortage of housing; and the introduction of a set of maximum standards that would prevent the disgusting display of sumptuous housing in the midst of appalling poverty which constitutes the real eyesore of so many Third World cities.

Finally, the idea that existing legislation on housing norms is largely responsible for the housing problem is not a new one. Sax (Engels, 1872: p. 64) suggested a similar course of action to resolve the problem over a hundred years ago:

First of all the State must take care that in its legislation and administration all those things which in any way result in accentuating the housing shortage amongst the working classes are abolished or appropriately remedied.

Engels' (1872: p. 64) reply to this nineteenth century version of Turnerism is somewhat instructive:

Consequently revision of building legislation and freedom from the building trades in order that building shall be cheaper. But in England building legislation is reduced to a minimum, the building trades are as free as birds in the air: nevertheless the housing shortage exists: in addition building is now done so cheaply in England, that houses shake when a cart goes by and every day some of them collapse.

Yet despite the nineteenth century freedom from building legislation and despite the subsequent strict revision of housing and planning norms, the housing shortage has remained. Britain still has something between 50,000 and 100,000 homeless families, and this number could reach over a million if we take into consideration those families who are living in sub-standard conditions. This would seem to indicate that outside of the desirability of legislating especially responsible norms, the origins of the problem and its solution lie elsewhere.

This ties in with Turner's two other major recommendations: the introduction of legislative and planning practices that set limits rather than procedural lines for housing activity; and, the separation of various levels of authority in housing activities, with the restriction of central government and municipal influence to certain well defined and basic functions. Though there is much of value in his discussion, again we are confronted with the problem that the structural limitations of Turner's recommendations would seem to drastically inhibit the impact of such changes in planning law and practice. Turner comes out heavily in favour of legislative planning; that is to say planning that sets limits within which people can do as they choose. It is therefore informed by prescriptive law. Executive planning involves planning through programmed specifications and procedures; i.e. it sets out specifications of what is to be done, and it lays down procedural lines to be followed. It is therefore based on prescriptive law. Turner believes that the imposition of planning in the context of appropriate matching of levels of authority by limiting central and municipal government influence to certain well-defined and basic functions, will go a long way to dealing with the housing problem.

But given the structural limits of Turner's recommendations, is the difference between proscriptive and prescriptive law that significant? Anatole France once remarked that 'the Law in all its Majesty has declared that neither rich man nor poor man has the right to sleep under bridges'. Let us make this into a prescriptive law – the law in all its majesty has declared that both rich and poor men have the right to sleep under bridges. Would this make the slightest difference? Would we find more rich men sleeping under bridges or less poor? No, because it is not the law, but the fact of being rich or poor that determines who has to make their home under bridges. The law is but an expression of the fact that the rich do not have to, and changing the law in either instance will not automatically mean that the poor do not have to.

Similar objections can be raised to Turner's arguments about matching levels of authority correctly with housing activities. Turner (1976: p. 123) argues that:

Large organizations should have little or no business building or matching dwelling environments. Instead they should be doing a great deal more business installing infrastructure and manufacturing and supplying tools and materials that people in their own enterprises can use locally.

Quite so, but we can change and shift levels of authority to our heart's content and if the basic processes that determine the organization and technical scale of activities and their centralization are not considered or dealt with, then all such 'decrees' must have an inbuilt impotence.
8. CONCLUSION

The housing problem in Third World societies can best be understood as the product of the general conditions of capitalist development rather than the product of particular technological or organizational systems as theories of the Turner type would have us believe. These general conditions constitute the structural source of both the urban and the housing problem: the spread of capitalist relations in the countryside which leads to the expulsion of the peasant to the city; industrial development of a monopoly character that leads to the destruction of labour-intensive industry; and high levels of dependency on foreign finance capital which amongst other things determines levels of interest and the size of urban and housing budgets, and subjects national housing activities to fluctuations in the global economy. Neither the urban nor the housing problem can be dealt with in isolation. As Engels (1872: 74) remarked:

As long as the capitalist mode of production continues to exist it is folly to hope for an isolated settlement of the housing question affecting the lot of the workers. The solution lies in the abolition of the capitalist mode of production and the appropriation of all the means of subsistence and the instruments of labour by the working class itself.

More specifically the determining elements of the housing problem must be sought for in the commodity status of housing objects which are produced and exchanged in a society dominated by the capitalist mode of production. Pradilla (1976: p. 82) has isolated the principal components of this problem in the following areas: the commodity status of housing objects; the search for profit by the various fractions of capital tied to the housing process; the distribution of income, and, the transmission of the ideology of private property and consumption.

Moreover, as long as policies are suggested that do not get beyond these general conditions, and which leave them intact, then these policies must also be analysed as proposals for the maintenance of the capitalist mode of production. Thus Turner's recommendations represent nothing less than the now traditional attempts of capitalist interests to palliate the housing shortage in ways that do not interfere with the effective operation of these interests. As Engels (1872: p. 59) quite correctly noted, these have always consisted of self-help on the part of the masses, or State assistance. The only new innovation that Turner recommends is the formula: 'State assistance for self-help' - a policy that he obviously regards as somewhat radical. It is worthwhile therefore looking at the structural limits to his solution of the low-income housing problem, and how his policies articulate the interests of the various fractions of capital tied to the housing process.

As we have already seen, the relationship between the different types of housing production is that of the industrialized and manufactured production of housing for those income groups with sufficient capital to cover the costs of production, ground-rents and the profits of the various fractions of capital tied to its production, consumption and exchange; and the self-help form for those beyond effective demand, where housing is produced at a much lower level of circulation of capital. Petty commodity housing performs an important function within the capitalist mode of production by providing cheaply the basic housing necessary for the maintenance of that mode of production (i.e. the satisfaction of the fundamental housing needs of the work-force). Turner's policy recommendations must be understood as an attempt to stimulate the growth and the expansion of this type of housing, given the failure of housing that is more directly integrated with capitalist relations of production and exchange to satisfy the needs of progressively larger sectors of the population.

Nonetheless the potentialities for the expansion of petty commodity housing are structurally conditioned by its relationship with the dominant capitalist mode of production: the petty commodity form in housing is articulated by the dominant capitalist mode of production and very much dependent on its operations. In some aspects petty commodity production of housing displays its pre-capitalist nature, and at the same time it has been widely penetrated by capitalist elements — not only in terms of the capitalist production of housing goods and services for exchange, and the informal marketing and rental of land and housing within urban neighbourhoods, but also in terms of the duplication of capitalist interests at the informal level. These can take the form of professional invaders, false improvers and speculators, political organizers of invasions (informal estate agents), loan-sharks providing credit for construction (informal finance capitalists), and a whole range of intermediaries involved in the complex sub-contractual work relations within the barrio.

What then are the interests tied to the expansion of petty commodity housing, and how would they contemplate and be affected
by the changes that Turner would like to see implemented? First, Turner’s constant (1967: p. 178; 1968: p. 358; 1976: pp. 29, 41, 67 etc.) references to local entrepreneurs, and the desirability of and the necessity for social differentiation within urban neighbourhoods as a guarantee of ‘social progress’ are all sufficient proof that his ideas rest ideologically in favour of petit-bourgeois interests and that his ‘alternative’ housing strategy involves the rearrangement rather than replacement of existing capitalist social relations.

Of course, given a condition of dominant petty commodity production of housing, it would remain a very open question whether the poor would benefit from the fact that they themselves would have to contribute so much more to the satisfaction of their own needs on top of employment elsewhere, or indeed whether the newly-emergent petit-bourgeoisie would serve them better. After all there was a time not so long ago when, in the advanced industrial societies, the bourgeoisie claimed it had a bourgeoisie without a proletariat (Bell, 1960). Now if we are to believe the ‘small is beautiful’ school, the future holds out to us the prospect of a petit-bourgeoisie with no bourgeoisie! The future so we are told lies with decentralized organization and administration, low-energy technologies and locally produced materials. Although we may all be in sympathy with protestations about the harmful effects of large-scale technology on the environment, and the economic irrationality of what it produces, there is nowhere in such analyses any attempt to explain why decentralized systems have disappeared or are disappearing, or even how they articulate with the more ‘centralized’ systems. Nor can there be, for in all such analyses the evil is seen to be technological or rather technologically-determined forms of social and economic organization.

That the bourgeoisie will be in opposition to this usurpation of its interests is inevitable, but this does not mean that it cannot arrive at some sort of economic and political arrangement with it, as long as this relationship remains one of its continued dominance. The continued and even expanded operation of petty commodity production could be permitted for example through a political necessity (i.e. to ensure the general conditions for capitalist production). The recent interest of the World Bank and the other agencies linked to US imperialism in small-scale producers can perhaps be best understood in these terms. There also exist some interesting historical analogies – thus though the European bourgeoisie was unable to tolerate the ruralization of Germany after Versailles, the Russian Czar was very willing to create a kulak class in the Russian countryside after 1905.

There are, therefore, fundamental reasons for believing that Turner’s policies will only be implemented alongside rather than instead of existing state housing policies, and that they will only assume a palliative or token character if they are accepted. However, within the overall structural constraints to the expansion of petty commodity production, there remains considerable room for manoeuvre at the conjunctural level, i.e. insofar as a limited expansion of petty commodity production benefits the interests of certain fractions of capital which are expressed at the level of the State in terms of housing, planning and urban legislation. If the State is seen as representing the interests of the various fractions of capital tied to housing and urban development (e.g. industrial, finance, landed and property capital), and if the relations between these different fractions are seen in terms of domination and subordination, then housing and urban policies will reflect the interests of the dominant fraction or fractions. Similarly changes in the political weight of these fractions will lead to changes in these policies. It is in the context of the often conflicting interests of landed, property, finance and industrial capital that the current debate between state-assisted self-help policies and official housing programmes must be situated. Turner of course posits them at the level of scale, bureaucracy and technology.

Institutional housing programmes have as their goal the production, consumption and the exchange of industrialized housing objects entirely through the mechanisms of the market and within the capitalist mode of production. They permit the maximum valorization of capital for the various fractions of capital involved. For the fraction of finance capital they allow the maximum extension of credit facilities and participation in formal capital markets: there is a widespread need for credit both in terms of production (advances of capital to State and construction interests) and consumption (initial downpayments, amortization and interest repayments). The interests of urban landed capital are satisfied in the large-scale supply of lands to the State housing agencies and large property companies, usually at inflated prices. Property capital has a vested interest in maintaining such programmes because they can participate directly in State housing schemes and can dovetail them with their own plans for industrial, commercial and
residential capital are satisfied through the way in which the design and planning specifications of government housing projects rationalize the interests of an industrialized building sector (e.g. construction and assembly of prefabricated components and structures, use of industrialized and standardized materials etc.). Such policies can also be geared closely to the interests of large monopolies producing cement, iron and roofing materials. At the level of the State, these housing projects are very easy to control politically; they can be sited according to middle class, industrial or commercial convenience, and they can have great advantages for the maintenance of public order and the political manipulation of their inhabitants. Finally, there is for obvious reasons an inherent bureaucratic and professional interest in the maintenance of institutionalized housing policies and an entrenched opposition to all programmes that minimize their personal intervention.

On the other hand, there are also extreme difficulties involved in the use of such policies for the solution of the housing problem. First, these are inevitably high-cost developments with the result that around 75% of the population can be put beyond effective demand. This strongly limits the ability of the capitalist mode of production to expand in the construction sector, and gives rise to all manner of political, economic and social conflicts. Attempts to stimulate demand are necessarily limited to attempts to extend credit, which has put the State more firmly than ever in the hands of finance capital and fluctuations in the international capitalist system. High interest rates and limits on levels of government subsidization, combined with spiralling housing costs (as a result of land speculation and monopoly pricing of materials) have resulted either in a dramatic deterioration in government housing programmes — both in quantity and quality — or in the progressive exclusion of broader sectors of the population from access to the formal housing market. Within the settlements themselves, deflections on rent can reach a dramatic level. Moreover, on a national level the amount of capital allocated to housing activities always gives rise to serious conflicts between the various fractions of capital. Given the limited potential of the construction sector to provide growth multipliers, and given the essentially consumptive rather than productive nature of housing investments, it is not surprising that industrial capital would like to see more of this capital set free for industrial development. Moreover, insofar as any increase in the subsistence costs of workers is reflected in the demand for higher wages, industrial capital is greatly concerned with the rocketing costs of such housing. All this combined with the political and social instability that any deterioration of the housing situation inevitably brings about, leads to a consideration of alternative ways of providing cheap housing.

It is at this point that state-assisted, self-help housing policies enter the debate. The essential question presents itself: how far can the petty commodity production of housing be stimulated to bridge the gap between housing need and housing supply? It should be pointed out from the outset that the processes of uncontrolled urban growth and peripheral squatting have not met with as much disapproval as is commonly believed. Squatter settlements allow a large, permanent industrial reserve army of labour to be cheaply installed in the cities. They also minimize housing and land costs and extend family budgets through landlordism and horticulture. The reduction of food and housing costs reduces pressure for wage increases. Squatter settlements also give some measure of political stability as they allow for owner-occupancy and the establishment of patron-client relations on a large and organized scale. They also permit tokenism as a form of distributing goodwill and allow the State or local political parties to get the credit for the unpaid labours of the settlers on public service provision or even on their own homes.

It is true that such settlements can cause serious disruptions and diseconomies particularly at the urban level, but the State has had neither the will nor the ability to interfere with these housing activities in anything except critical areas. On the other hand, the various fractions of capital that advocate self-help are very mindful of the benefits they can draw from bringing petty commodity housing much more closely under the influence of the State. Nonetheless there are important structural limits to any attempt to expand housing activities in the Turner fashion. First, any significant improvement in the low-income housing situation would lead immediately to a quickening of the rate of rural—urban migration and, given the diminishing supply of rental housing for low-income groups, these deficits would quickly reappear. Second, there are serious limitations to a policy that is based on the expansion of small-scale industry and commerce. A precondition for the continued operation of the capitalist mode of production is the greater generalization of commodity production for
exchange with the purpose of realizing profit, and this process inevitably occurs at the expense of smaller units of production. This would make the full acceptance of Turner's recommendations an impossibility without the prior destruction of the capitalist mode of production. Nevertheless, given the serious nature of the housing crisis in Third World countries, it can be said with some confidence that the owners of capital tied to housing activities, aided and abetted by the State will always attempt to maximize their interests. It may well be that recommendations of the Turner type, implemented through the State, could facilitate the increased penetration of industrialized building materials into markets now covered by petty commodity sources. The granting of legality of tenure to existing and future squatters would more effectively integrate those areas at present excluded by their own illegality into the process of capitalist valorization of urban land, and it is not inconceivable that more profit could be found in the provision of housing goods and services than in the full provision of the finished housing object.

There would seem to be little hope, therefore, that Turner's policies could be carried out on the scale and in the manner that he considers to be critical to their success. There is a greater likelihood that they will be used on a limited scale to further petty commodity interests in ways that are not detrimental to the maintenance of capitalist relations of production in general. Indeed, if Turner's policies were implemented on the scale and within those conditions of production, consumption and exchange that he leaves unaltered, there would be the most drastic and deleterious consequences for low-income groups. These can be summarized as six major points:

First, even if government-guaranteed access to housing resources was achieved by low-income groups it would represent a massive diversion of investment away from middle-class consumption. This would stand in direct opposition to the growth strategies of many Third World countries, and moreover would destroy the existing class alliances necessary for 'modernization' programmes. The question of access to resources is therefore essentially an economic and political problem rather than a technical one.

Second, the effect on the prices of basic building materials would be catastrophic. It would also extend to recycled materials which would acquire a new exchange-value inasmuch as they had found a new use-value. One only has to look at the increases in the prices of building materials and the value of urban land that have accompanied recent attempts to stimulate middle-class housing consumption in Brazil and Colombia, to realize the potential dangers here. Access to resources then is not guaranteed by legislation alone.

Third, the intervention of the State through the large-scale purchase of urban land would have equally dramatic effects on land values. No matter what the policy, it would increase the housing costs to those groups who would otherwise have avoided them. The problem of legality in other words is fundamentally the issue of market valuation of land.

Fourth, there would be an intolerable burden on the provision of infrastructure and urban services. The issue then is not one of the large-scale provision of infrastructure versus the provision of finished housing objects, but rather the great increase in the demand for infrastructure that accompanies a higher rate of construction.

Fifth, State assistance to self-help housing involves an investment in consumption and unpaid labour and therefore its multiplier effects are particularly limited. Housing policies therefore cannot be presented in isolation from more general development strategies. As mentioned earlier, if such policies did manage to make a significant impact on housing deficits, then they merely encourage increased migration to the city that would soon neutralize their impact. The housing problem therefore is equally as much a rural as an urban problem and both are functions of the operation of the dominant capitalist mode of production.

All this merely underscores the basic suspicion that the current fashion for self-help housing is no more than an ideological bluff, which in practice will be realized only at three levels:

First, as a set of token schemes: isolated experiments in self-help building, limited dweller control, model neighbourhoods and the like. Their very existence as isolated examples is then nothing less than a proof of the impossibility of their large-scale realization as long as the capitalist mode of production remains intact.

Second, the implementation of such institutional changes as the establishment of a 'sub-department of self-help' in the appropriate government housing agency. These programmes would then be integrated with the interests of those fractions of capital tied to institutional housing and cheapened not by the
elimination of their profits but because they involve the unpaid labour of their future owners. This would have some effect on the cost of the house but not significant enough to bring it into the range of most low-income groups. Turner has made known his opposition to such site and service programmes, but it is difficult to see how his policies would not be emasculated by a heavy bureaucratic presence given that the State apparatus remains untouched by his recommendations.

Third, an expansion of self-help housing projects to cover those sections of the population that can no longer be provided with private sector and public housing. The introduction of state-assisted self-help schemes would then be a response to the up-market movement characteristic of private and State housing which has left those lower middle and working class sectors of demand that previously had access to it with no other alternative than to squat. This up-market movement is also accompanied by the general deterioration in the quality of public housing through high interest rates and high land and building costs. The whole process would be facilitated by the move to lower minimum standards and legal restrictions. Government aided self-help programmes then, rather than being an improvement on worse housing conditions, would be a worsening of better ones. This up-market movement would seem to be confirmed by recent evidence from Brazil (Batley, 1976: p. 3) where large numbers of jaula dwellers claim to have previously had a better housing situation. Peattie and Doebele (1976: p. 4) suggest that existing government site and service programmes already function for this sector, 'creaming off the more established members of the working class' and 'leaving the others behind to fend as they may in the unorganized system'. They argue that such a policy is extremely dangerous as it physically separates these groups from the urban poor who are dependent on them for the local trickle-down effects of their incomes.

Finally, this is an interesting area in which to situate the whole debate on intermediate technology. Such measures as are suggested can be seen as technical attempts to level out the symptoms of a structural malaise and to maintain the status quo. As the crisis in global capitalism deepens, the costs of living space, recreational areas, urban services, infrastructure, energy and raw materials all increase dramatically. In advanced capitalist and Third World countries alike, intermediate technology and self-help philosophies are then put forward as a solution: build your own house, grow your own food, bicycle to work, become an artisan, and so on. To those in the Third World who have done all these things and who are still rarely far from starvation, such appeals to be more self-reliant must seem a rather curious form of radicalism!

NOTES

1. ‘Autoconstrucción’ literally means ‘self-construction’. As we shall see this is certainly an inadequate description of the low-income housing process, and lack of space prevents a discussion of the issues involved. Suffice it to say that many ‘self-built’ houses are far from ‘self-built’, many ‘squatter settlements’ are far from illegal, many ‘shanty-towns’ contain very few shanties, many ‘invasions’ are populated by people who are not invaders and so on. These issues are discussed in Burgess (1978).

2. The importance of private property to the development prospects of a house is critical to Turner’s argument and is discussed later in this article. Marx once remarked that those who do not learn from history are bound to repeat it, and it would seem Turner’s unenviable task to bring back an argument that was rendered decisively impotent over a hundred years ago – but this time without Sax’s reservations!

3. The depoliticization of planning theory has been a subject of considerable debate in recent years (Custells, 1976b; Pradilla, 1974). The way in which it is achieved in Turner’s work is discussed later in this paper.

4. The validity of this analogy is, I think, highly suspect. Though Turner’s intention is undoubtedly to define housing as a subject/object relationship in which process is a more effective description than the object produced, one cannot eliminate the suspicion that the two usages show either a partiality in favour of the object (noun), or a partiality in favour of the subject (verb). A crude objectivism or subjectivism is hardly an adequate description of housing activities. Even if the analogy achieved what Turner says it does, it is by no means certain that the significant differences derive more from the linguistic structure (properties of a noun, properties of a verb), than they do from the inner meaning of the word ‘housing’.

5. These difficulties centre around the question: when does an object acquire commodity status – in the actual act of exchange, or when it is perceived as a commodity? An object of human labour can only acquire the status of a commodity under the social conditions of private property, division of labour and exchange. The obvious difficulty with self-help housing is that though it can be built for immediate use and not exchange, it or a part of it can later enter into the exchange process, and its constituent elements...
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(self-help house in general is not the only producer of already entered into such a process. We have already noted the complication that the consumer of the self-help house in general is not the only producer of the house.

6. In this article the term 'official' housing is used interchangeably with 'government-supplied' or 'public' housing. The term 'institutionalized' housing covers both these categories and housing applied through the private construction sector. It should be obvious that all are characterized by Turner as the products of heteronomous systems.

7. Turner obviously does not use class-based categories to identify the financial interests tied to these costs.


9. Though housing use-values are closely related to the satisfaction of basic needs, these needs are not defined simply by biology. Human needs are variable, social and historical, and will thus be defined according to the level of material development reached by society, and the collection of values (i.e. ideology) that is attached to the house. Once we have a system of biologically determined existential needs that are matched against an ideological set of material needs (e.g. priority for freehold tenure, modern material standards etc.) through a set of housing priorities that are a function of income (which is a description of what they are under capitalism), then it is hardly surprising that we end up with the social segregation of the environment being conceived of as the expression of the rational allocation of use-values. Nor for the same reason, given the assumption of the primacy of use-value in housing and of social and economic mobility of migrants, is it surprising that we end up with the concept of slums as functional: as a sort of spatial constant — a classical instance of the sort of thing that Castells has pointed out: the reduction of an historical and social variable to an ahistorical and spatial constant.

10. All attempts to accommodate the content of widely different and historically specific social formations within a self-proclaimed 'universal' explanatory system — whether it is based on technological determinism or on the autonomy of urban industrialism — are inevitably ideological and are always used to claim a spurious value-neutrality for the categories that are used. Turner's work is no exception to this rule. For a related discussion of the role of ideology in the context of geographical research see Burgess (1976).

11. Such an analysis is nowhere to be found in Turner's work. He would seem to remain unaware of these considerations or even of the political significance of his own policy recommendations. A good example of such an analysis is Pradilla (1974) which goes a long way to explaining the interests tied to the various urban reform programmes of the Colombian government over the last 20 years.

12. Lack of space prevents a full discussion of the relationship between the petty commodity form of production and the capitalist mode of production. The issue centres on the relevance of Marx's analysis of the transitional role of petty commodity production in the development of capitalism in nineteenth century Europe to existing conditions in the Third World (Capital, Vol. II). It centres specifically on the historical inability of petty commodity forms of production to reproduce themselves developmentally and independently of widely different modes of production. The issues are adequately discussed in Lebrun and Gerry (1975) and Kahn (1975).

13. It should be apparent that the description of these housing activities as forms of housing production tends to complicate the more fundamental distinction of forms and modes of production. These difficulties will have to be ironed out in future work.

14. What is being suggested here is the classification of low-income settlements on the basis of the degree of integration of the settlements into the capitalist economy through the production, consumption and exchange of land and housing. Such an analysis would incorporate the movement from potential commodity to real commodity and the forms of improvement of land and dwellings, and would integrate these processes with the political, ideological and institutional processes accompanying and facilitating this movement. The overall theoretical structure for such a classification would be the articulation of the petty commodity forms of housing production by the dominant capitalist mode of production. This would provide a more satisfactory typology of settlements that the currently popular attempts to create them on the basis of the cross-tabulation of location, degrees of legality and rates of physical improvement (Turner, 1969). Legality is only one and perhaps not the most important measure of the degree of integration of such settlements into the 'formal' structures. Outside of this consideration one of the principal problems of the classification of settlements in terms of legality is that it cannot cope with the nuances of Third World (especially Latin American) legal systems which graduate legality in a virtually unintelligible way that baffles both lawyer and social scientist alike!

15. In Colombia, for example, cement is produced by 12 companies, four of which control 60% of national production. The country is mutually divided up into regional monopolies and prices are fixed by tacit agreement between the companies. More importantly the price of cement is determined by the artificially stimulated level of middle class demand for housing of this type, and by the fact that payment for supplies of cement has to be made three months in advance of delivery (thus capturing an extra profit equal to the rate of interest on money during this period).

16. Often the quality of materials from the industrialized building sector is much better than those from the manufactured sector. Despite lower costs of production, by offering these materials at the same price as those from the manufactured sector they can capture markets from local producers.
17. This relates to the dynamics of petty commodity production which is increasingly being penetrated and transformed by the capitalist mode of production. Gerry (1975), following Marx, sees the process of proletarianization of the work-force as accompanying this movement. This transition is characterized by an increase in the organic composition of capital. It will be noted that this is precisely the conceptual boundary between the self-help and the manufactured forms in Pradilla's framework. In this sense the intermediary position of the manufactured form between the industrialized and self-help forms tends to make static what is essentially a dynamic movement between production for use-value and production for exchange-value. This is a conceptual problem that reappears in all discussions of the relationship between petty commodity production and the capitalist mode of production, or for that matter between the informal and formal sectors.

18. It is of course in this area that we can look for a more satisfactory definition of 'self-help' housing.

19. Pradilla and Jimenez (1973) have an excellent discussion of the relationship between ideology, schools of design and systems of construction.

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