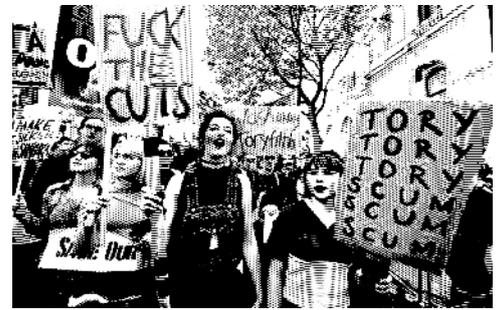
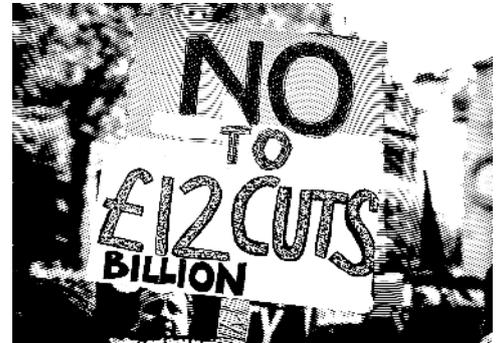


REBEL CITY

London's anarchist paper | Issue Two | Free/Donation



Keep On Fighting

Tories for another 5 years! Londoners took to the streets in disgust- angry that we have to put up with more cuts and attacks on the poor, more hand-outs to the rich, the continued sell-off of London to speculators and the social cleansing of London as well as the increase in oppressive laws and police repression.

But what would have happened if Labour had won? Would things really be much different? There may have been a different government, but the real power would still be there: the banks, the corporate bosses and management, the civil service and the police. There is little chance that Labour would have actually implemented any of their 'promises' such as the mansion tax. The rich would have mobilised and Labour would have soon backed down. Remember it was Labour that bailed out the banks. And, the trade unions and other Labour

cheerleaders would have told us to 'give them a chance' and don't rock the boat.

So rather than despairing over a Tory victory, we need to do what we have already been doing: developing an effective movement of resistance against all the attacks against us, in the workplace and in the community, continuing our efforts to make London the Rebel City. Don't be sidetracked by new projects to create new political parties and alliances; the real struggle is at the grass roots.

In this issue of Rebel City we continue to highlight some of the campaigns that have been fighting back, such as the campaign to Save Earl's Court and the surrounding estates and Haringey Solidarity Group's campaign against workfare. We also provide some research and analysis to support our struggles.

What is gentrification?

There is no doubt that gentrification is real. But the concept of gentrification itself comes with its own history and politics. The word was coined in 1964 by a British sociologist Ruth Glass. Originally, gentrification meant the renewal of existing properties: as credit became more available, working class people were buying their own homes. The neighbourhood benefited and the area still kept its identity and diversity of people.

Today, social change is driving urban change: a new middle class population is dictating the rules of housing market. This means that the whole social character of places is changing.



Bermondsey Square used to be an antique market. The site was owned by Southwark Council and when not used for the morning market on Friday, the square served as a car park. Now is £60m mixed-used regeneration project

*Bermondsey - "Spatiality in gentrifying London: The case of Bermondsey", 2009
Jamie Keddie*



Barmby area, Borough of Highbury & Islington, new trendy coffee shop

Whether gentrification is a fundamental restructuring of urban space depends not on where new inhabitants come from but on how much productive capital returns to the area from the suburbs

*Islington - "Gentrification"/ 5.
Barmby case*

Developers focus on building small open plan apartments with workspaces, to benefit smaller households: young parents with high salaries or well-educated single professionals. This is where the money is, so no other kinds of flats are built.

The middle class householders targeted by the developers are colonising spaces that already existed, residents that were there before are now resented within their own community and conflicts can and do occur.

Former industrial areas such as the warehouses in Docklands and Dalston for instance are converted into luxury open plan apartments. Amazing new buildings stand alongside the river, offering an "astonishing view and landscape for an amazing valuable investment."

Gentrifiers are perceived as hostile or even racist. On the other hand, the working class are pushed to the margin,

both politically and economically, and put at risk of homelessness. Today we are seeing a return to the lively debates about gentrification of the 1980s, with working class communities describing their experiences as "social cleansing."

Flow of money

In his influential study of 1979, Neil Smith argues that "gentrification is movement of capital not people".

He points out that the process of uneven investment of capital in land use and devaluation was bringing the opportunity for profit. His rent-gap theory describes the gap between current rental income of a property and the potential achievable rent income. The difference between these two explains the interest of investors – rich individuals, organisations and banks.

Anti-gentrification protest indicating tension between the new middle classes and the original residents



Cities all around the world are shaken by gentrification. People are grouping together to resist and fight for their right to stay in place. Their precarious living and wellbeing is threatened by low incomes leading to little or no chance of competing in the market.

The impact of gentrification

Demographic	Increase in median income, a decline in the proportion of racial minorities Displacement of individuals causing loss of social diversity and increased sense of misery, a clinical condition called "root shock"
Social	The presence of a new educated and wealthy middle class in working class areas, imposing changes in life styles and houses preference, converting urban decay into new chic
Market	Large increase in rents and house prices, increases in the number of conversion of rental units, rent-gap theory
Land use	Increasing uniformity of areas and loss of urban identity Restaurants, retailers, shopping centre, lack of attention on what is desirable and attractive for all range of individuals. Government, community developers, corporations and city bodies are the most responsible

Night of the Living Boris

Palaces in the air

It's been an eventful few months for London Mayor Boris Johnson. Regular readers will remember how Boris' ongoing wheeze to turn London into a cash-cow for developers and a playground for the super-rich included plans "to reconstruct the Crystal Palace [the original burned down in 1936] in a way that is faithful to the spirit of the original, in all its ingenuity, scale and magnificence, to create an internationally recognised landmark building."

Well, it looks like this particular scheme couldn't withstand public scrutiny. After Bromley Council was forced to reveal its "Memorandum of Understanding" with secretive Chinese developers ZhongRong Group (ZRG), the plans have been scrapped – despite attracting interest from world-famous architects like Richard Rogers (best known to Londoners for the Millennium Dome). Condemned in colourful terms by fellow architect Sam Jacob as "zombie architecture" designed to "pull on our tender heartstrings in the service of large-scale development," this aspect of Boris' grand plan has now been buried with a stake through its heart – for the time being at least.

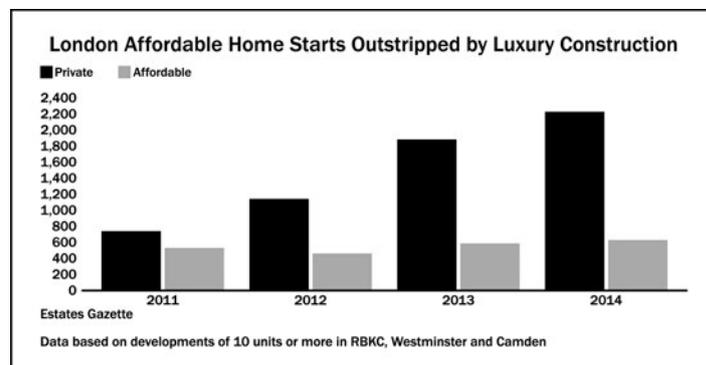
Boris' bonanza

Despite this setback, the developers continue to make a fortune, with Boris backing them all the way. London's most expensive boroughs for housing are failing to secure construction of affordable homes even as the number of luxury developments surges. And remember, "affordable" can mean 80% of market rent.

Low-cost properties accounted for 28 out of every 100 homes started in Westminster, Camden and Kensington & Chelsea last year, according to property magazine Estates Gazette. That's down from 70 for every 100 in 2011.

Much of the UK's affordable housing is funded by private developers through levies paid in return for planning permits. The number of social and affordable homes completed in England fell by almost 30 percent in 2014 from three years earlier as Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne cut spending on housing.

"The Conservative-led government slashed the affordable housing subsidy by 60 percent, causing developers to cite viability as a reason they couldn't build those homes," said Nadia Elghamry, data editor at Estates Gazette. "The theory was that cash contributions paid by developers, rather than physically building homes on site, should have plugged this gap. They have not."



The number of private homes that started construction in Westminster, Camden and Kensington & Chelsea in 2014 more than trebled to 2,219 from three years earlier. The number of affordable homes rose less than 20 percent to 625 in the same period.

Developers can pay levies to avoid building affordable homes, although the growth in the payments hasn't matched the increase in building. The boroughs received £134 million in 2014, compared with £111 million in 2011.

Islington and Camden borough councils are seeking a judicial review of Boris Johnson's decision to approve a 681-home development at Royal Mail Group Plc's Mount Pleasant land plot. At least 42 percent of the homes should be affordable instead of the 24 percent approved by Johnson, the councils said in a statement. But with Boris all-too-ready to wield his special powers as Mayor to impose his will on planning decisions, the legal route can quickly become a dead end.

And in the meantime, he's been elected as a Member of Parliament....

21st. Century Slavery

For five long years a top priority of the previous government was to humiliate, demonise and punish those on benefits. A principal target was the unemployed, simply because they were unemployed and unfortunate enough to have no other source of income. Over those years, workfare schemes, where the unemployed are forced to work for their benefits, have become increasingly punitive. Following the election, that ain't about to change.

When Cameron recently claimed that the Tories will be the party of hard-working people, it is important to understand that what he didn't say was, 'therefore we will hammer those on benefits mercilessly'.

Currently, tens of thousands have been forced on to the hated Community Work Placement scheme. Regardless of their physical or mental well-being and skills, claimants are forced to work for 30 hours a week for 6 months, most

commonly in a charity shop. Any objection, questioning or the slightest stepping out of line results in sanctions: the stopping of benefits for a minimum of 3 weeks.

Haringey Solidarity Group has been acting in solidarity with our unemployed brothers and sisters for months and campaigning against this particular scheme. G4S, the greedy bastards who grab huge government grants and promptly fiddle as much as they can, run the scheme across much of the country. In Haringey they sub-contract it out to a firm called Urban Futures. We have been at the gates of this company weekly offering our support to claimants on the scheme. Frequently they have reported bullying and abusive tactics used by Urban Futures staff to whip claimants into line. Those tactics appear to have softened since we occupied their offices last year.

Our main focus is on those charities who use the 6-month workfare placements. It seems quite bizarre to us that

...continued on page 4

charities which have been established to help those in need should then exploit the unemployed, who under the frequently-used sanctions regime, often end up dependent upon food banks and destitute. Our activities outside Traid in Wood Green quickly encouraged them to leave the scheme. And on discovering a Marie Curie shop using the scheme, a few phone calls around their senior management put an end to that. Perhaps the charity with the biggest stake locally is North London Hospice. They have 18 shops across north London and could be using as many as 50 claimants in those shops. We have been picketing them every weekend for months and, after discussions with the charity's executives, we find we are

having an impact as they are promising to leave the scheme. But until we have a deadline for their withdrawal, we will continue our action.

Claimants have joined our campaign in order to defend themselves and their colleagues. We need to stand together and defend each other. Our campaign can and does make a difference. If we can put enough pressure on these charities to force them to pull out, the scheme will collapse. Why not join us? Sticking it to the government and its hated workfare schemes is not only good fun - it's good for us all.

Haringey Solidarity Group

Focus on Deptford

On Monday 19 April the police and officers from Immigration Enforcement conducted raids on shops on Deptford High Street. The raid started with Agege Bread, an Afro-Caribbean bakery, and then went to a number of other black or Asian owned businesses at the south end of the High Street. It looks like nobody was arrested or cautioned in connection with any crime. The immigration officers also didn't find anyone without documentation.

The officers gave a number of different reasons for their actions. At one shop they told staff they wanted to check that the gas was safe. At another, they claimed to be checking the lighting. Elsewhere they said they wanted to check whether the shop was obeying fire regulations. After each fake inspection, immigration officers checked the immigration status of people they found inside the shop.

Officers were reported as being rude and often refused to give a reason why they were there. One shop was completely closed down for around 4 hours. They refused to allow the shopkeeper to leave, even though he was not under arrest or being held according to any other powers. When he asked to leave, they threatened him with a caution. There were also reports of officers asking whether the shopkeepers could give them access to the flats above. They had no warrants to search any flats on the High Street, and were very unclear about why they would want to enter the premises anyway.

After the raid I handed out information from the Anti-Raids Network and spoke to shopkeepers. A common complaint was that raids on the market have increased in recent years. One shop has already been raided five or six times in 2015. This is spoiling their business: as well as having goods seized, the presence of police and immigration officers on the market damages trade. One shop had three employees taken away by Immigration Enforcement earlier this year. When I asked workers at a shop whether they thought immigration officers were focusing on any types of people in particular, they told me that the officers only targeted black and Asian people, and generally ignore white people.

In February the local Labour Party, aided by Lewisham Council, organised a meeting for market traders to discuss their issues. In attendance were the local Labour councillors and Lewisham Deptford MP, Vicky Foxcroft. First among the issues was the problem of speculative raids, which the councillors claimed were unauthorised. Traders

were worried that their business was being destroyed by the actions of the police and Immigration Enforcement. Traders came away from the meeting feeling like something would be done about this by the councillors. However, nothing has changed, and many feel their business will not survive if they and their customers continue to be harassed.

Market traders also feel that one reason for the increase in immigration raids over the last few months was the coming election. Traders felt that they and their customers were being punished for the politicians' racist rhetoric around immigration and refugees over the last few months.

Finally, another potential reason behind the raids is the Deptford Project, a new £47 million development on the High Street opening this summer. The Project will include "132 new homes, 14 artisan arch space workshops, 7 commercial units, 2 restaurants and a new market square." This new build, one of a large number over the previous decade, will dramatically change the racial and class make-up of the area, and has attracted new businesses to the High Street (a skate shop, a bike shop/cafe, a coffee shop, the Job Centre pub, an art shop, and so on). It is noticeable that none of these new businesses have been raided or had "check-ups" on their gas, electric, or flats above their shops. It is also noticeable that their customers are more likely to be white and middle-class. One way of seeing these raids is as a conscious attempt to undermine the economic base of minority stallholders on the market, to make it appear an even more attractive investment to real estate speculators.

Right now shopowners, traders, customers, employees and just about everyone else on the market subjected to these raids are feeling helpless. People consistently told me that they aren't sure what they can do, or who they can talk to, to stop this happening. Many have already tried to raise complaints through official channels, and either been lied to or ignored. One person told me that the thing they liked most about working and living in Deptford was that people supported each other, regardless of where they were from or what the colour of their skin was. They also told me that it felt like this sense of community and openness to others was being destroyed by the raids, and that they worried about the future of the market if they are allowed to carry on.

This was written by a member of the London Campaign Against Police & State Violence.

Polar Bloc: This isn't about polar bears



A few months ago, a community arts meeting was held in the Heathrow villages. Artists, activists, and local people got together to discuss ideas for projects to celebrate the local community and also to highlight the numerous problems that airport expansion will cause. Exciting ideas were bounced around, of which several have already got well under way. It was whilst thinking of creative and funny ways to disrupt airports and raise awareness that the idea of Polar Bloc was born.

A few weeks later, together with the Time To Act Climate March, the first Polar Bloc action took place, as 30 or so Polar Bears invaded Heathrow's Terminal 2. Whilst there Polar Bears danced, pushed each other around on luggage trolleys, asked to get on flights to find some ice and banners were dropped saying 'Any New Runway Is Plane Stupid'. Following the action, many of the bears joined the end of the climate march and the actions that took place there.

Since these actions, the Polar Bloc has also visited Gatwick Airport and Norman Fosters offices. Fosters are the architects of both Heathrow's Terminal 2 and a proposed 6 runway airport in Mexico City, which has met fierce resistance from the local residents of Atenco to which the state has responded with out and out repression.

More than just Polar Bears

In planning these actions we've been very conscious of the fact that the climate change = poor polar bears narrative is highly problematic. We know that the impacts of climate change are much more than a few charismatic mega-fauna losing their homes.

If we continue the way we're going, the effects of climate change are going to be devastating. In fact, the impacts are already being felt now, and the effects are disproportionately felt by poor, black and indigenous communities around the world. On top of this, ecosystems are being devastated, which should be seen as having value in their own right, never mind the fact that we as humans rely on them in many ways for our existence.

Any solution to the climate crisis must get to the roots of the problem. Capitalism, with its need for perpetual growth is inherently tied to environmental damage, increasing pollution and increasing waste. This radical critique is becoming more widely accepted, as shown by the popularity of books such as Naomi Klein's 'This Changes Everything'. In the actions we've been a part of we aim to make sure that this remains a central part of the argument, through the use of banners stating that 'Capitalism is Crisis' and through our media messaging.

Fluffy on the outside, Furry Fury on the inside

Although there are some fairly arbitrary by-laws that police can exploit in airports, it's fair to say that the actions Polar Bloc has been involved with have been on the fluffy side. There is a strong value, however, in using creative and amusing forms of protest in that it can open up these kinds of actions to those who don't see themselves as 'activists'.

In the short time that Polar Bloc actions have been taking place, many local people who have little or no experience in direct action have either joined us, been inspired to organise their own actions or have reached out to us to ask for help to organise actions. This may in the future pave the way for these people taking part in 'spikier' actions or mean that they are in spaces where police repression is felt, which is often a cause for radicalisation and disenfranchisement with official routes of protest.

This said, there is nothing to suggest that creative forms of action, that might look fluffy, cannot be escalated. Disruptions can be caused by a bunch of people in silly costumes, dancing in the 'wrong place', falling over because they 'can't see' where they're going and so on.

All the while, a radical critique of the crises we are facing should be held at the forefront of the agenda.

Just Do It

So, what do you do if you want to get involved in Polar Bloc actions? Well, like other kinds of blocs we're not really an organisation so much as a tactic to be used in appropriate circumstances. We're loosely tied to all kinds of groups and shouldn't be too hard to find if you really want to look for us. That said, why not get together with your own group of friends (or 'affinity group') and do it yourself. You'll know what issues are most important for you and in the area you're in, you'll have an idea of what themes, costumes and jokes might go down well in the context. Get out there, have fun and stay safe!

Love from

The Polar Bloc - Against all airports, for a world beyond their imagination!



Save Earl's Court and the People's Estates!

Imagine a part of London with 22 acres of decent social housing. Two peaceful, mixed tenure estates with playgrounds, basketball courts and community centres. Some residents have lived there for over 40 years, bringing up their children and their grandchildren. There are open spaces as well as front and back gardens.

Picture a thriving range of businesses in the area which have grown to cater for visitors to a global, iconic venue which brings over £1.25BN a year to the local and national economy. The world's most successful artists come here to perform, from Calvin Harris to the Arctic Monkeys. Envision that this is a double Olympic venue, with an Olympic sized swimming pool - a 1930's feat of engineering still admired today. Make this venue suitable for events so that it provides 30% of London's vital exhibition space and 16% of the UK's.

Conjure up against the venue's walls a depot which employs approximately 500 people, provides apprenticeships and performs a vital service to the London Underground system. Visualise a Track Manufacturing Division whose factory/workshop manufactures track components that are not made anywhere else in Britain. From special sleepers and railway timbers, to highly technical rails for points and crossings to whole crossing layouts. They even manufacture bridges occasionally. Add a Heavy Maintenance and Renewals department. This section performs major project work across London Underground.

This is not a flight of fancy, it exists. It is the Earls Court Exhibition Centre, West Kensington and Gibbs Green estates and the Lillie Bridge Depot.

All this is under threat of demolition by a joint venture between Capital & Counties Plc (Capco) and Transport for London. Luxury flats and luxury town houses way out of reach of the ordinary person will replace a thriving and enduring district of London.

There is not one additional social rented home on the Earls Court "Masterplan" and under the planning consent, there is no mechanism for reviewing the amount of affordable housing on the scheme which given the size of the 77 acre development, you would expect there to be.

There are more disturbing aspects of this development which include the existence of a Collateral Agreement between the developer and LBHF Council which fetters the Council in representing its residents; the undervaluation of the Earls Court project at £8bn by the developer (when its true value is £12bn plus) to avoid having to build more affordable housing; Demolition and Waste Management Plans which are of great concern not just to local residents but also the wider London community; Capco's business partner on the Lillie Square part of the Masterplan having been found guilty of corruption in Hong Kong.

The wrecking balls are already decimating Earls Court One and the developer has applied for planning permission for a "regeneration" office on the Estates.

You can find out more about the fight against this "City Village" at www.saveearlscourt.com and <https://westkengibbsgreen.wordpress.com>

Galliard goes for Poor Doors



In Issue 1 of Rebel City we featured a look at Galliard, one of the big developers in London. We pointed out that Capital Towers, their development on the border of Newham and Tower Hamlets, features no social or "Affordable" housing whatsoever. We also looked at their schemes with the West Ham Stadium which would also include no social housing and the minimum of affordable housing.

They've gone one better though with their plans for a development at Wapping Riverside.

What Galliard is selling to the outside world...

"Set within a spectacular warehouse conversion, Wapping Riverside offers 37 exclusive apartments enjoying panoramic views across the Thames. Comprising 1- to 3-bedroom loft style apartments, the residences perfectly combine original Grade II brickwork features with luxury contemporary functionality."

These apartments range from £1.4 million for two bedrooms to £2.7 million for three bedrooms.

What they do not reveal is that the 14 "affordable" units will have "separate entrance lobbies, lift cores, bin stores and cycle stores for both the market and affordable units, with all units having access to communal amenity space at roof level." This is revealed in a Tower Hamlets Council document.

There is a big difference in size between luxury & affordable – a 4 bedroom affordable flat is 99.8 square meters, smaller than a 2 bed luxury, at 105.9 square meters. This is from email correspondence between Galliard and Tower Hamlets, which Tower Hamlets foolishly put on their website. Reading between the lines, it looks like Galliard were being a bit vague about how small the affordable flats would be, until the council pushed them on it.

Both entrances to the building are on Wapping High Street – not like One Commercial Street where the poor door is hidden around the corner. However in effect there are still two different entrances with what amounts to a Poor Door for the affordable flats. The posh flats have a large and imposing entrance with concierge service, whilst the Poor Doors are small in comparison and what you could call unassuming.

The development falls below Tower Hamlets' target of 50% affordable for new developments, although 10 of the affordable flats are social rented). The Council's price for any issues with the developments (they call it "mitigation") are the following "contributions" from the developers:

- (a) Idea Stores, Libraries and Archives - £13,860.00
- (b) Leisure Facilities - £49,125.00

...continued on page 7

- (c) Education - £185,681.00
- (d) Health - £67,830.00
- (e) Sustainable Transport - £1,650.00
- (f) Public Open Space - £88,268.40
- (g) Streetscene and Built Environment - £85,488.00
- (h) Monitoring - £10,167.79

In other words they have made a payment of half a million to Tower Hamlets Council in order not to have some of the affordable housing. They did the same with Capital Towers when they paid Newham Council almost a million to have neither "affordable" nor social housing there. This won't do anything to address the shortage of genuinely affordable homes if developers are allowed to pay their way out of their obligations to build it.

"As a result of negotiations the scheme was subsequently amended by the applicant to provide a total of 14 on-site affordable units (56 habitable rooms), which equates to an affordable housing provision of 35.2% by habitable room. As such, the proposal development accords with Policy SP02(3) of the Council's adopted Core Strategy (2010),

which requires a minimum provision of 35% affordable housing provision on schemes providing 10 or more dwellings."

So basically Galliard agreed to build one more affordable flat, and then the council decide that, no, it's not the number of affordable flats we care about, it's the number of affordable habitable rooms, which we can make meet another one of our targets. Real "Yes, Minister" stuff.

The Council document reads: "It should be noted that the proposal does not include any provision of 'Affordable Rent' units, which whilst defined as affordable housing are units where rents can be charged at levels up to 80% of market rates and are considered to be unaffordable to the majority of Tower Hamlets residents."

This is a useful admission by Tower Hamlets that the whole "affordable rent" thing is bullshit, so they can't really hide behind it for other developments. Shame on Tower Hamlets Council which has rolled over to have its tummy tickled by Galliard. Meanwhile Galliard trousers big profits from their developments, puts in Poor Doors and avoids any obligation to provide affordable housing.

A Step Towards a Rebel City - the Radical Left General Assembly

When people woke to the news of another 5 years of Tory rule, there was a palpable anger in the air. On a mandate of only 24% of the population, they had been handed power to enact policies which promised to hurt the poorest and most marginalised in our society. But the Tories weren't an exception in this; Labour were likewise committed to austerity and to demonising immigrants, and many of their councils have been at the forefront of attacks on public services and social housing. So the anger was aimed not just at the coming cuts, but at the political situation as a whole, with any semblance of a Party in parliament capable of representing working people utterly in tatters.

A call went out for a meeting of the radical left, initiated by the group Brick Lane Debates. It began: "The election has proved that Social Democracy is dead." Calls for unity among the left are nothing new, but the tenor was now different: Labour have failed. Trade unions have failed. Top-down groups like People's Assembly and Left Unity have failed. We need a completely new approach, one opposed to state 'representative' democracy, and focused instead on what is already happening in communities across the city. And this resonated: 1,000 people attended, with more watching via livestream and following #RadicalAssembly on Twitter.

The call was not without precedent: it was inspired by the recent successes of the grassroots housing movement in London, and their model of connecting autonomous local groups through a network or loose federal structure. As we argued in the last issue of Rebel City, this movement has shown more success in battling the excesses of capitalism and the violence of the state than any other aspect of the 'left' over the past year: through occupations against demolition, anti-eviction flashmobs, and pickets capable of shutting down Boris' MIPIM property developers' conference. In this spirit the Radical Left General Assembly callout was made – seeking not another top-down bureaucratic organisation, but a new non-hierarchical network of grassroots campaign groups already engaged in radical, militant action in their communities.

There were a number of problems with the initial event however. For all the talk of direct democracy, elements of top-down control seeped

into the format. Whilst much of the evening was full of energy and small group discussion, there was later discontent at a rushed through vote on proposals. The prominence of certain 'celebrity' speakers was also rightfully criticised. Many of the problems were ironed out by the second assembly, but it goes to show that even the well-meaning must be constantly on guard for power creeping back in to supposedly non-hierarchical organisation.

There are also future dangers, such as the possibility these Radical Assemblies will be used to support a Podemos-style electoralism. For all that can be said in the Spanish left-wing party's favour, their focus on electoral victory may have contributed to demobilising the grassroots *indignados* movement. Some argue that the previously lively neighbourhood assemblies have emptied, as people have returned to waiting for these new representatives to sort everything out. Further, any electoral success will serve to reproduce the authoritarian state democracy which created this mess in the first place. We believe in retaining power always in the grassroots, and never handing it over to elected representatives.

But wherever the General Assemblies go after this, they have already created or kicked off a slew of new groups – amongst others a Reclaim Hackney, that hopes to recreate the energy and success of Reclaim Brixton; a Radical Food Network, which aims to bring the model of fighting housing injustice to hunger and food distribution; as well a series of 5 regional assemblies – all now organising and preparing for direct action, out of an event arranged with only 4 days notice. The creation and linking of these groups are the kind of steps we need to take if, as we called for in the last issue, we're to 'make London a Rebel City' - a place taken control of by its ordinary inhabitants, not by rich business people, racist police forces, and authoritarian governments. What's coming out of the Radical Left General Assembly shows the energy and appetite for a new movement not bound to the old left, and not content with politely marching from A to B to ask the government to change policy. People want deep social change, to combat the deep social scars that have been inflicted by previous national and local governments, both Tory and Labour. They are angry, not apathetic, and are ready to fight back.

A Sideways Look... at Renting

A while ago I went past a building site in East London. Outside were brightly coloured hoardings advertising the new flats, extolling the location and the quality, especially the equally-sized rooms and good sound insulation. These are all admirable things, but how bad must things be that it's worth building an advertising campaign around meeting what ought to be basic standards?

There used to be regulation about space, number of toilets and heating, introduced in 1961 and initially applicable to homes built by local councils and new towns (as most were in those days). The standards were called Parker Morris, after the report that worked them out based on what furniture residents would expect to have. I grew up in a house built to these regulations, and while I resented having to share a room with my brother, the house itself had plenty of space, though the kitchen became more cramped as over the years as a freezer and washing machine arrived. What changed was the Thatcher government, which abolished the standards as mandatory in 1980, and did so much to stop any new council house building. Space and amenities then became the preserve of those who could afford them, which they remain to this day. In the late 80s there was a campaign to

stop Margaret MacMillan Park in Deptford being built on: it was partially successful, some of the park has been kept, but the houses that were built there are tiny. The staircases are in the living room and normal size furniture doesn't fit. Ironically, furniture appears to be bucking the trend in other areas of life for miniaturisation – perhaps our bodies aren't shrinking enough?

After two decades of no enforceable standards in housing, some development agencies such as English Partnerships and the London Mayor's Office have started to insist on them. But the scale of the housing crisis in London is such that it makes little difference – there are already regulations preventing houses being rented out to 30 people at once, but this still goes on because the state has neither the ability nor will to enforce it. Where councils have set up teams to deal with houses with too many residents, it only moves the problem on: enforcement in this case is just about stopping overcrowding in one place, not solving housing problems.

At present, housing is a prime political issue. There is almost universal political support for building more council homes or holding down rents, but no political party has made any meaningful pledges to do it. One lesson is clear from the last election: politicians will ignore the issues that matter to lots of people whenever it suits them. What can't be ignored is taking action.

Get involved!

Here is a selection of campaigns and groups that are helping to make London the Rebel City. (see article on evictions for other contacts)

London-wide

Radical Housing Network: a network of groups who are active around housing issues in their local area. Also organises London-wide events such as Block the Budget.
<http://radicalhousingnetwork.org/>

London Coalition Against Poverty: <http://www.lcap.org.uk/>

Industrial Workers of the World: <https://www.iww.org.uk/londongmb>

East London

Action East End: publishes The Howler and supports local campaigns.
<https://actioneastend.wordpress.com/>

Focus E15: very active campaigning group based in Newham. Involved in fights against social cleansing and evictions.
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Focus-E15-Mothers/602860129757343>

North London

Haringey Solidarity Group: local group that campaigns on a variety of issues, such as workfare, as well as producing a regular paper.
<http://www.haringey.org.uk/content/>

Haringey Housing Action Group: <http://haringeyhousingaction.org.uk/>

Radical Islington: <http://islingtoninciter.blogspot.co.uk/>

South London

Housing Action Lambeth and Southwark: <http://housingactionsouthwarkandlambeth.wordpress.com/>

Lambeth Housing Activists: <http://housingactivists.co.uk/>

If you would like to write an article for Rebel City about your group's work, please email us at: london@afed.org.uk

Are you interested in finding out more about anarchism?

The Anarchist Federation aims to support and make links between campaigns that empower working class people or that challenge capitalism and all systems of power. The London group of the Anarchist Federation meets twice a month and also hosts monthly discussion meetings.

E-mail: london@afed.co.uk

Facebook: London Anarchist Federation group

Twitter: @AfedLondon

Blog: aflondon.wordpress.com

We also publish the paper *Resistance* and a magazine *Organise*, as well as a range of Pamphlets. For more information about these publications as well as the Anarchist Federation in general see the website: www.afed.org.uk.

**Produced by the
London group of the
Anarchist Federation**

