

Creating Sustainable Housing: The challenge of moving beyond environmentalism to new models of social development.

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The paper explores the current debates and agendas surrounding the idea of sustainable forms of housing. This debate is situated within the wider 'sustainability' debate which is shown to have deep contradictions and considerable ambiguity especially around extent to which 'strong' rather than 'weak' notions of sustainability are used as the basis of policy. Two traditions of 'sustainable housing' are identified. The first is the idea of the green or natural/environmentally friendly house focussing on the physical structures and design of the building and the second focussing on social well-being, health and housing. Here access to affordable housing in good condition has been seen as a basic social right and a necessary condition for full participation within the community.

The paper argues that a full understanding of 'sustainable housing and its contribution to well-being requires an examination of the relationship between the house as a physical object and home as a source of emotional support and meaning contributing to our sense of identity. Further the house-home relationship is located within a local neighbourhood and the linkages here are crucial. New movements in planning and design of neighbourhoods are examined to assess the extent to which they are supportive of more "sustainable housing" and are shown to be somewhat contradictory in their objectives and outcomes and may in fact increase separation and inequality and perpetuate forms of community which are no longer congruent with social practices. The final section of the paper addresses some of the policy implications of the analysis.

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