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## **HOUSED by CHOICE, HOUSED by FORCE - Homes, Conflicts and Conflicting Interests**

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Architecture\_MPS, University of Cyprus; Cyprus Institute

### **Abstract / Initial Proposal Form:**

**1. Paper / Proposal Title:** Housing for Emancipated Wives and Bertrand Russell's Contemplative Habit of Mind (London 1935 and 2015)

**2. Format:** Written paper

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### **6. Abstract (300 words):**

Bertrand Russell turns architect, at least in words, in his 1935 "Architecture and Social Questions" essay and revisits Robert Owen's communitarian ideas as implemented in New Larnak's productive units (1800-1824). Russell deploys his analytical philosophy toolkit to claim that unlike the rational organization of production in the mid-war Britain factory, the British home has remain "unscientific; he sets up his argument for an architecture reform of housing which entails the liberation of married women from the woes of housekeeping.

The text, written in between the two wars, adds up to our historical knowledge on a particular aspect of the social housing discourse which Russell centers on the position of woman within the family living and working arrangements. Although feminist struggles focused on housing early on (1915 rent strikes), Russell's text cannot be read within the discourse of feminism. His discussion of women emancipation and its visceral relation with architectural housing reform is embedded in Russell's own distinctive conceptual framework. This paper will argue that Architecture and social housing serve him well in reinforcing his own thinking of a 'contemplative state of mind'.

In fact, "Architecture and Social Questions" is one of the 15 essays gathered and published together under the telling title In Praise of idleness. Topics such as "social housing, the virtues of cool reflection, free enquire, the value of 'useless' knowledge, all inform a particular stance: "a contemplative habit of mind in a world of maddening unreason".

Can the revisiting of Russell's 'contemplative state of mind' provide the conceptual tools to approach the current context of London's maddening housing provision, articulated in terms of 'density' and 'scarcity'? The paper migrates Russell's 1935 mindset to question the demand for more housing in 2015 London; Can Russell 'cool reflection' serve us well in understanding a city with a growing population in which the urban impact of conflicting interests is manifested in the rich and poor widening divide but played out in terms of housing?

#### 7. Author(s) Biography (200 words maximum for all authors):

Dr Maria THEODOROU, architect ARB/RIBA, is senior lecturer, H&T\_PG coordinator at Leeds School of Architecture and Director and founding member of the independent School of Architecture for All (SARCHA) [www.sarcha.gr](http://www.sarcha.gr) She holds a PhD in H&T (AA) and has been a Fulbright visiting fellow (Princeton, 2005). In charge of SARCHA's research programme since 2006, Maria has directed projects such as: the CCR Athens Gerani, pilot project, shortlisted at The Resourceful Architect international competition, RSA, London 2011; the Polypolis role playing social game, presented at the British Council's International Architecture and Design Showcase, LFA 2012 [www.polypolis.sarcha.gr](http://www.polypolis.sarcha.gr) and Demos, presented at the LFA 2013 upon invitation by the British Council [www.demos.sarcha.gr](http://www.demos.sarcha.gr). SARCHA's projects have attracted funds by ESRC and the EC Youth in Action program and featured in AJ and Blueprint. Maria's current research, publications and teaching focuses on architecture and the political and she has been Invited speaker and critic at Princeton, AA, Bartlett, ESALA (Edinburgh), EPFL (Lausanne), CCEA (Prague), Onassis Foundation, the Hellenic League for Human Rights, (Athens), etc., and invited juror at UIA international architecture competitions. Current projects include the preparation of Brazil by SARCHA project, and the co-organizing of the 6th International Conference on Design Competitions (ICC 2016) under the RIBA auspices.