



For the event with no name... APRIL 2008

Housing matters on the Planet Earth building site

A home to live in, or at least safe shelter, comes at the top of the list of basic necessities – alongside food and water – for day to day survival and as a base for our daily activities. Any society that cannot provide these basics for everyone has failed and requires serious radical change. Unfortunately, our everyday reality has been conquered by money makers and the politics of greed and difference; communities replaced by the drive for profit and consumption.

The UK homeless crisis is an artificially induced situation: Only 7.5% of the UK's land is settled upon yet house prices have gone up nearly 700% since 1980. Whilst an acre of agricultural land can be bought for around £2000 the average price of a house is nearer to £200,000 despite there being over ½ million empty properties at a very conservative estimate (this doesn't include many of the second homes and holiday lets of the greedy, for example). On top of this, 70% of the land is owned by 1% of the population.

House and rent prices have been kept high as well, through the attack on public housing in the interests of private gain. We have the disposal of council housing (through Right To Buy, stock transfer and the backdoor privatisation via ALMOs). Elsewhere social housing associations are forced to charge higher rents. These organisations sold off £563 million worth of property in 2006/07 to keep them afloat due partially to the withdrawal of government funds and housing law, not to mention inflated administrative wages.

The government wants to build 3 million more homes (after demolishing many communities in schemes to make way for them such as John Prescott's Pathfinder project in Liverpool). This provides a fat

windfall for construction firms, financial institutions, and public private consultants as well as the corrupt and greedy in local councils.

Given the amount of empty properties many of these buildings are not needed at all. This all pushes the homeless into the hands of greedy landlords and private renters or into mortgages they cannot afford ready for their homes to be repossessed then bought at knock down rates by corporate property vultures. Less mortgages are now being offered as a predicted slump in house prices and the market kicks in. So less people are able to join even the unstable world of eventual possible home ownership and the years of debt that take a lifetime to pay off. Debt and speculation based on property runs the economy, only very few benefit from this shared hallucination.

Renting keeps us in place by tying our hands, making us dependent on work, which will rarely provide enough to escape the poverty trap. Private landlords exploit tenants and due to the 1988 Housing Act section 21 can now fast-track evictions and thus help to trap tenants in their substandard accommodation (where the

fuck do they get that wallpaper from? Planet Landlord?). In 2006 10,000 families were evicted thanks to this. No wonder 1.6 million people are on the council waiting list hoping for affordable rents.

But then – why should we be renting at all? With so much land and an ecological crisis bearing down on us why can we not create our own autonomous spaces and sustainable communities away from this profit-motivated corporate destruction. After all we have a surplus of land! The Town and Planning Act 1947 might stop construction corporations rampaging across the countryside but it also traps us in urban areas so that the landed gentry don't have us plebs on their doorstep. Indeed the act was drafted with the aid of the same toffs from the Council for the Protection of Rural England.

The winners: 1. Construction and financial corporations and their friends in parliament; 2. The landed gentry; 3. Poverty Pimps in housing/homeless NGOs and PFI housing schemes; 4. Unscrupulous landlords and property speculators; 5. Those paid to police us in case we get any funny ideas about wealth redistribution. The losers – the rest of us. **Continued on the inside...**

London Coalition Against Poverty (LCAP)

Since 2007 LCAP has been using direct action casework to challenge injustice and abuses, mainly relating to housing. Legal work such as advocacy and letter writing is combined with disruptive action; like bringing a group of people in to occupy the appropriate council office. LCAP began at the homeless unit in Hackney, as people were being turned away without being assessed and housed. People whose applications have been 'gatekept' have been supported, for example turning up at a Housing Office en masse, demanding action and refusing to leave, or helping to change locks in order to buy more time. "Our work is not just limited to housing issues, we will back people up in any situation where we could stand to win results. We also organise and campaign against poverty and attacks on working class, low income people."

WWW.LCAP.ORG.UK / 07932 241737

Housing Matters continued...

High rent is also a reason why employers can get people to work ridiculously long shifts in areas such as catering. Of course, the mainstream media propagating the myths of its rich owners would have you believe that squatters and the homeless are just lazy drug addicts with hygiene problems. That is not the case; but then these myths are there to keep this unjustifiable status quo and reap them huge profits. (Hence why the high proportion of homeless ex-service people are rarely mentioned.)

The 2012 Olympics are a mega-con that has happened because the deciding authorities are not answerable to the general public that is subsidising them through council tax increases, the lottery etc. Indeed, the corporate land grab that is the Olympics has displaced more than 2 million people in the last 20 years, particularly affecting minorities, the homeless and the poor. Participatory democracy has not had much of a voting electorate for some time; look at the low turn-out in elections. Those in power have no real mandate to rule as they target only swing voters and the upwardly mobile. The rest of us stay well away with good reason, though haven't got round to retrieving control.

As an example of worker exploitation, a person working in the London service industry on £7 an hour (the jobcentre tells me that's a good wage!) working a 40 hour week and privately renting a 1

bedroom flat on the average rent of £175 would spend around 75% net income on rent. What quality of life are they going to have? That is why there are many low paid workers squatting!

Squatting is an ethical solution to centuries of violent land theft by the rich and powerful and a way to confront the dismal alienation of this consumer culture that rewards the rich and greedy and punishes the poor. The scam that is the property ladder is meant to justify this theft.

Co-ops are one way to become legal without abandoning our ethics, however there are no Radical Routes co-ops in London due to the high purchase cost of

buildings. Most other co-ops are more or less closed to the general public.

Rupture has put forward the idea of a flourishing network of social centres, run by the people who use them. But not just community centres that are an extension of local business interests and conform to middle management ideas of controlling people by reducing us to mere consumers. What we're mainly lacking at the moment are access points to cultures of resistance, places and people that inspire and encourage us to participate in conscious, forward-thinking activities. Freedom needs somewhere to happen, and social centres can be a base to try and bypass the usual pressures.



London STREET BLITZ

After a moderately successful first run last July the fortnight of street-art returns to London 1-15 May 2008. The concept is simple but potentially very effective and by utilising the power of the Internet (and benefiting from a growing common 'net literacy amongst the great unwashed) it opens up the whole city as a gallery space; and not confining it to internal, controlled and possibly inaccessible spaces.

What the 'organisers' are asking for is that during the two weeks everyone who wants to participate gets out there, installs some art (or any act of creative subversion), documents it and then trots off to a computer somewhere to mark its place on a map on the Street Blitz website – along with photos, description and any other details.

One of the strongest facets of this new form of art exhibition is that it can be appreciated and noted on many different levels. For

general art-consuming people more familiar with a gallery it's a 'festival of street-art', with no mention of the criminal damage often involved; funnily enough, the first Blitz featured in the 'What's Hot' column of mass-circulation free rag The London Paper!

For the subversive and politically-minded they will probably align with the original motivations behind the Street Blitz events: reclaiming space, feeling an element of freedom in day-to-day life inside big cities – and deciding what we get to look at everyday. It's as much about self-empowerment and finding your inner artist (everyone is encouraged to have a bash) as wanting to push street-art in general.

For active street-artists, who usually without fail will make some decent documentation of their own work, it's just another opportunity to get their stuff on the walls, but perhaps also to take part in something new and fresh.

It can be seen as an experiment in making a decentralised festival (ok, a server is centralised, so we're clearly just using it as a buzz-word, alright). It's about using the 'net to overcome problems with finding and

using space; without having to pay for it or succumb to legal restrictions. The method of mapping used by Blitzers could be applied to other areas too, like a map of CCTV cameras, empty buildings prime for squatting etc.

The broad appeal of Street Blitz means it doesn't have to be illegal works of art going up – decorating the exterior of your squat, finding a legal wall to decorate, street actions, outdoor cinema – all forms of art fully accessible to the public are welcome. What Street Blitz want to stress is that a large part of the point is documenting your work, before some irksome busybody comes and removes it. This means taking a camera with you, or teaming up with someone who follows behind you taking a set of pics whilst you're busy legging it.

More info on the brief and also a few tips for those dipping their toes can be found on the website. The map will only be active from the 1st of May, but that day has it's own special relevance so here's hoping there won't be any time wasted in having our say in the visual landscape of London. Next, the world!

WWW.STREETBLITZ.ORG

TWO POINT TWO

A new social centre has been opened in London for the 'Days of Action for Squats and Autonomous Spaces'. Currently nicknamed 'two point two' (as in rampart 2.2) the new building is an exact illustration of the concepts embodied in the graphic designed for the call out. On one side sits the new squat and on the other loom huge tower blocks and cranes. On the open land between, yellow bulldozers sit menacingly as the wave of advancing development threatens to engulf not only the little squat but also the homes, business and culture of the local community around it.

The owners have deliberately left the building empty for at least five years after being refused permission to demolish the building for redevelopment of the site. Instead of using, renting or selling the building, the owners have instead left it with smashed windows and a bloody great hole torn out of the roof. It doesn't take a genius to figure out that the owners are simply waiting for the building to fall into disrepair so they can justify demolition to the planning authority. As if that wasn't bad enough they've removed the stairs, pulled up floorboards, cut out the water pipes and smashed all the toilets in an attempt to ensure no pesky squatters took up residence to look after the building.

Despite the state of the building we decided it was worth squatting anyway, partly due to the symbolic value of occupying and renovating a building that the owners are leaving empty while they wait for it to fall apart; but also because it has most of the attributes we wanted and is centrally and conveniently located.

In the two weeks since we started the occupation all the missing floorboards have been replaced, two flights of stairs rebuilt, new water pipes laid to the toilets and kitchen, two new toilets installed and cisterns plumbed in, the hole in roof repaired and some of the many smashed

rampART

The rampART social centre in Whitechapel is still open, despite the owners having won a possession order, although this week the local planning authority will decide whether to grant planning permission for the partial demolition of the properties in the block – so eviction may follow soon after. The social centre organising meetings continue to take place every Monday evening and the collective is eager to remind people that the rampART is still available and we're keen to see the space get good use during whatever time is left.

Every Saturday, the Food Not Bombs group continues to use the space to cook free food for distribution in Whitechapel. Over the Saint Patricks weekend the building accommodated 50 activists from Ireland who were visiting London to take part in actions against Shell. No Borders London are planning a benefit gig for May 1st and if the social centre is still open by May then rampART will be celebrating its fourth anniversary.

windows patched up or replaced. We've also installed sinks and rigged up electricity via a large bank of batteries and an inverter.

The plan is to launch the social centre for the decentralised days of action for squats and autonomous spaces over the weekend of the 11th to 13th April. The space will host an art exhibition, a squatters estate agents, skill-sharing workshops and discussions along with films and a cafe.

Long term (if such a term can mean anything in relation to squat projects in London) we intend to explore how far permaculture design and low impact technologies can practically be implemented in a squatted environment. In practice this will hopefully mean things like rain-water harvesting and grey-water toilet flushing; dry compost toilets; pedal-powered washing machine; pedal-powered sound system; wind and solar electricity supplemented when necessary by a waste veg-oil powered generator; low-power thin-client computer suite; draught proofing, secondary double-glazing and insulation; recycling and composting schemes; and herbs, salads and more grown in the garden.

RAMPART.CO.NR

rampart@mutualaid.org

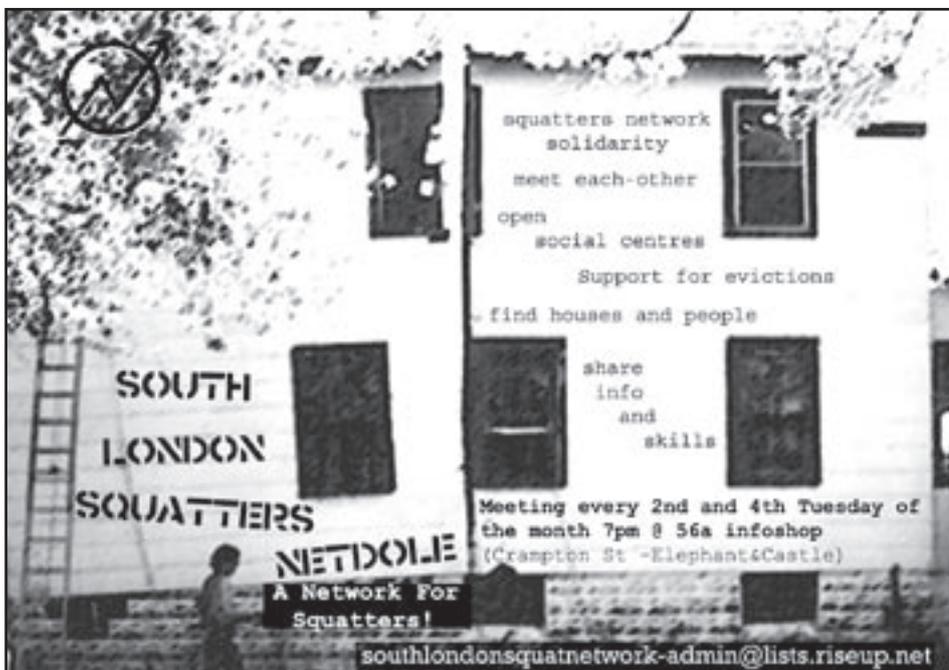
Infousurpa + Offline

Infousurpa is a bi-weekly listings of events in London Social Centres and beyond. It's now published together with Indymedia's London Offline zine.

Infousurpa and Offline could be seen as a link between the virtual space of the internet and the physical space of the social centres and between the people who participate in those social centres. Most of the information gathered comes by email (infousurpa@riseup.net) and from the different social centres' websites, then printed and distributed across the social centres in London – or at least as far as our bikes take us.

The easiest way to collaborate with Infousurpa is by telling us about events in London, and downloading and printing it, and then sticking it on the door of your social centre – ideally facing the street so that passers by can see it. The London edition is inspired by the original Infousurpa, born in Barcelona and reachable at the website usurpa.squat.net.

In London we aim to bring it out every two weeks in a 4 page booklet. You can download, print and distribute it... if you want to get involved, get in touch: infousurpa@riseup.net or visit the website: **INFOUSURPA.CO.NR**



PARTIES + ART + RADIO + PROTESTS

SEND STUFF TO

RUPTURE@HEADFUK.NET

FREE FILM SCREENINGS

A different radical/alternative/just damn interesting feature film each Monday evening. Donations welcome. 7.30pm start. Pogo Café, 76 Clarence Road, Hackney, London. E5 8HB www.pogocafe.co.uk

11 – 13.04.08

A08 – DAYS OF ACTION

2 days of decentralised squat and autonomous centre actions. april2008.squat.net for the full international agenda but you can find...

IN LONDON:

Fri 11th: Info-event and cafe from 7pm at the original **rampART social centre**

15-17 Rampart Street, E1 2LA

www.rampart.co.nr

Fri 11th: Acoustic bands and performance from 6pm at **NO:ID GALLERY**, 26 Calvert Avenue, E2 7JP www.noidgallery.net

Sat 12th – Sunday 13th: SPACE IS THE PLACE: Open-access gallery, practical workshops, discussions and cinema based around theme of housing, land and free spaces, at the new Rampart 2.2 social centre, 6 Bowl Court, off Plough Yard EC2

www.housing-matters.org.uk

www.rampart.co.nr

Sat 12th: Advisory Service for Squatters benefit event from 8pm with supper then music with bands and DJs at

Hackney Social Centre, 231 Lower Clapton Road, London E5 8EG

www.hackneysocialcentre.blogspot.com

IN MANCHESTER:

MANCHESTER SPACE INVADERS

Fri 11th: Band nite from 5pm. Venue tbc

Sat 12th: Bike Art Parade from 2pm. Park Fun Day 1pm-6pm. Demonstration from 5pm. For Sat events meet Cathedral Gardens, next to Urbis. mcraz.wordpress.com/ 07526 256932

12.04.08

LONDON MULTI-RIG RAVEUP

Say goodbye to winter with KSS, Disjunkt, Stonka, Fucked Right Up, Arena, Under Konstruktion and Ill Industries sound systems.

London venue tbc

07835 175534 / 07092 006876

12.04.08

RAVE OR DIE

Breakcore and other rave music.

10pm – 4am. £5 b4 12, £6 after

The Redstar, 319 Camberwell Road, London

SE5 0HQ www.leadpipe.co.uk

26.04.08

LONDON ZINE SYMPOSIUM 2008

Free event over the course of a day with much DIY mayhem, merriment and mirth!

The Rag Factory, 16-18 Heneage Street,

London E1 5LJ

londonzinesymposium.lasthours.org.uk

1 – 15.05.08

STREET BLITZ LONDON

The 2-week open festival of street art hits the capital again. Install your artwork then post up the location on the map on the website for all the world to see. This is your city – leave your mark! www.streetblitz.org

01.05.08

MAYDAY – INVASION OF THE CLIMATE SNATCHERS

On International Workers' Day, there will be a climate change protest in the UK.

networkforclimateaction.org.uk

02 – 04.05.08

FASLANE PEACE CAMP PUNKS PICNIC

Live music and malicious mischief. Bring a tent! Tel 07835 215 787 or 07770893815.

myspace.com/faslanepeacecamp see also www.faslane.co.nr

03.05.08

RED ZERO RADIO vs UGLY FUNK

3pm – midnight. Free entry. The Foundry, Great Eastern St, near Old St tube.

www.uglyfunk.com/ www.redzeroradio.net

16.05.08

SUBLIMINAL DISCHARGE 666

10pm – 6am. £10 b4 12pm, £12 after.

Jack's Nightclub, 7-9 Crucifix Lane, London, SE1 3JW www.subliminaldischarge.co.uk

29.05 – 01.06.08

NORTH LONDON PUNX PICNIC

www.myspace.com/london_punx_picnic_08



PARTIES + EVENTS

www.headfuk.net

www.nofixedabode.info

www.pitchless.org

www.ketwork32.com

www.squatjuice.com

www.crossbones.co.uk

www.partyvibe.com

www.hekate.co.uk

www.tribeofmunt.co.uk

www.clubneurotica.com

www.ragandbonerecords.co.uk

www.uglyfunk.com

shockraver.free.fr

www.dayliterobbery.org

www.rif23.org

www.abacussounds.net

www.hyponik.com

ART + MEDIA + THE REST

www.taaexhibitions.org

www.randomartists.org

www.network23.org.uk

www.resonancefm.com

www.dbreach.fm

c8.com

www.indymedia.org.uk

schnews.org.uk

www.eroding.org.uk

www.squatter.org.uk

www.riseup.net

www.56a.org.uk

libcom.org

en.wikipedia.org

www.braindamageradio.com

www.dirtysquatters.com

www.instructables.com

PARTYLINES

Disjunkt 07835 175534

NFA 07092 812259

Hekate 07092 017667

Pitchless 07946 839775

Ill Eagle 07780 986765

Abacus 07974 892670

FUBAR 07984 199768

Malfaiteurs 020 7806 9555

HDFK 07092 230023

PRANK 07870 827511

Unsound 07946 466573

Club

Neurotica 07788 856941

If you run any of the above infolines please put the date on your messages so that people don't travel to an empty building!