

Introduction

Households: The (un)ruly book

An exploration into how we might better live together with a focus towards sharing, agency and autonomy

Households draws from personal reflections of living and ageing. It is inspired by Raising the Roof's aspirations to construct an alternative to what is available in the current political landscape of housing, social care, and economics: *Home, at Last* (Archifringe 2019).

The recent pandemic has focused ever-sharper light on the need for quality housing and open space for all and is re-adjusting our expectations towards more diverse forms of household arrangements. In summer 2020, Voices of Experience (VoE) invited their participants and the Raising the Roof (RtR) team to consider how they/we might 'live our older lives'. Sketchbooks were sent out for gathering thoughts, images and values which were later shared in audio and zoomed conversations.

The (un)ruly book has been co-produced through further discussions and the specific creative practices of the VoE and RtR teams. It is organised around 5 themes which aim to (un)learn how a design for a specific place and group might be taken forward: **Contributing and Stewarding** (ownership + factoring), **Rooting and Interdependence** (access and amenities), **Sharing and Making Space** (private and communal areas), **Testing Limits and Taking Chances** (health and safety) and **Taking Time and Care** (maintenance).

The (un)ruly book considers how we might better live together with a focus towards themes of sharing, agency and autonomy in the context of increasing age demographics, rising levels of loneliness and working from home as an already lived reality for many, particularly women and those with caring responsibilities.

We invite everyone to consider how we might collectively re-imagine our households and working lives in a way that embraces equity, not working/retiring or the giving and receiving of care as we adopt alternative value systems and spatial outcomes.

Note: In this book, when we refer to 'we', this applies to us personally as contributors and authors. Equally, it is our hope and intention that this will include and inspire others, particularly those seeking alternative opportunities for living.

Contributing and Stewarding

We will be custodians of our homes and communities and establish our own Charter, Financial model, constitution, and covenant.

We seek to foster decision-making strategies and economic models that are empowering, fair and sustainable. With older - and younger - people living as dynamic agents in their home and community, acting with agency and voice.

To do this, we must create the antithesis of the traditional, mono-cultured Boardroom. And find different ways to grow, develop, listen, and share, and with a diverse range of people involved in the decision-making process.

We want to provide inclusive and alternative forums for hosting and convening with a broad spectrum of opportunities and platforms for production and participation contributions and mutual exchange via individuals and groups.

Our financial model must be equitable and affordable. It cannot rely on individual capital alone. Instead, we will establish an equitable platform for mutual benefit, contribution, and exchange. Working together across lifetimes and landscapes to acknowledge and value everyone's contribution and labour at all stages in their lives.

Ultimately, we seek to bring joy and agency to our community and to the city, and in doing so, better steward our lives, our homes, our land, and our environment.

Rooting and Interdependence

Our homes and households should be places to be supported, to share and to belong. We want to be rooted in our place and our neighbourhoods. Inhabiting spaces and landscapes that are particular and responsive to their environment and surroundings.

We challenge the 'one size fits all' approach to development, which reduces homes to faceless, placeless commodities to be stacked, packed and carelessly clad.

We want to respond to the environmental crisis and consciously embrace new sustainable energy sources, to reduce waste and consumption through the building materials that we work with, and to increase biodiversity and our interdependence with nature through the way we cultivate the land and green space on which our homes are situated.

We actively acknowledge that there is no utopia or perfect home setting. Yet, we can all positively contribute to the neighbourhoods and green spaces in which we live and take responsibility for how they might grow and evolve. Our homes and neighbourhoods and gardens must be adaptable and future proofed for our ever-changing lives and growing older. So, we don't have to leave unless we wish to.

Our homes and communities must be built to last, adapt and endure the test of time. This can't be done using bricks and mortar only. We must be visible, firmly rooted in our place, active participants, neighbourly in our behaviour and wholly inter-dependent.

We want to be engaged across a range of spectrums with our friends and neighbours. To be empowered citizens.

Sharing and Making Space

We want to share spaces and values. To give and receive; across time, energy, eating, working, growing, space and travel; and to enjoy the liminal space between private and the public, indoor and outdoor, lifestyles and lifetimes.

We therefore challenge the dominance of the spatial status quo; where our homes are planned like individual cookie cutters with no regard for how we might want to live and share our lives or how that might adapt and change over time.

We see potential in sharing and making space together that balances practicality with joy in a truly circular way. To create space and time to work, care, create, clean, garden, rest, and play.

We should be able to choose whether we should climb a ladder to get to bed, to invite friends over to stay, to dance in a voluminous space or shower in the garden.

And we don't think this is really too much to expect; a small private outdoor area, a communal garden sink, a tree outside our window, a shared workspace, a cosy snug, or our very own cabinets of curiosities.

We want to make space for positive and generative possibilities for one another.

Testing Limits and Taking Chances

We see that there is an opportunity to test the economics, the finance, and spatial limits of the home - and to reassess ideas of risk and chance. To challenge heteronormative ideas around home and ensure that everyone is placed at the centre of decision-making around their own lives, communities, and environments.

The current property and care home model set fixed limits that are acutely risk averse, overly regulated, and standardised. These commodify lives and homes based on silo-ed thinking around age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, spatial arrangements, needs, desires and activities.

We need a conceptual shift around thinking, about individual needs, activities, and the use of space. Particularly as we move into our older lives. We want to a co-creative, dynamic relationship between people who will be dwelling in and those who bring architectural skills and knowledge to our collective homemaking.

We can see no place for us and our future lives within the current elderly property market and the over-regulated, monotone care home model. Instead of 'downsizing' or facing 'removal' we want to grow, expand and 'take up' more physical and cultural space.

We want to create spaces that engender opportunities, test boundaries, and exude confidence. To climb into our beds when we choose, to cook, eat and drink with our friends when the moment takes us, to actively share our labour and experience, to debate topics and issues into the night.

To do this, we must be custodians of our own households, communities and the activities that take place within them. Changing perceptions of what a home for an older person is and look likes. One that changes over time and provide opportunities that are wide-ranging, risky, abundant, and unexpected.

Taking Time and Care

We want to spend time and take care maintaining our lives, our bodies, our homes, our minds, experiences and knowledge, our communities, and our planet. We do not consider maintenance to be a cost and a burden, but rather an act of care, craft, and attention.

The current care home model is focused on the medicalisation and segregation of the body, time, and space. It requires individuals to conform to set patterns, removing opportunities for personal choice and agency. There is little room for difference and almost no individual control over actions, space, time, and the environment.

We want to have choice and agency over our homes, our communities, and our lives. To be able to do things for ourselves and support others. In the process of making change in our households we alter wider public perception of what an older person is and what an older person can do.

With our experience, time, and ability, we can look after ourselves, our neighbours, our homes, and our planet. We want to flourish and invest in a rich and pluralistic way of living. To have time and space to share, mend, repair, grow and nurture. To have the freedom and agency to make choices, move around and share our physical, economic, environmental, and cultural space with others.

We want to be home, at last.