



Ash Sakula



homeimprovements



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Collective Custom Build is a web-based advocacy tool that makes the case for developing Collective Custom Build as part of a more diverse housing market in the UK. It uses an animated narrative to curate key research findings, revealing them as peelbacks at key points in its argument.

Collective Custom Build is part of the *Motivating Collective Custom Build* practice-based research project within the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded *Home Improvements Knowledge Exchange* based at the University of Sheffield. *Motivating Collective Custom Build* is led jointly by the University of Sheffield School of Architecture, Ash Sakula Architects and Design for Homes.

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AROUND THE WORLD

VOLUME HOUSE-BUILDING IS NOT NORMAL

Summary

The UK is dependent upon volume house-building¹ due to a complex range of interdependent factors including industry culture and lack of diversity in procurement and financial models. However, this remains unusual in the world context.

In other countries, it is relatively common for people to build their own homes and for self-provision² to represent a pervasive and viable procurement route for housing alongside buying - or renting - an existing or speculatively built property. In Austria, for example, self-provision accounts for up to 80% of housing supply (NaSBA, 2008, p. 10); in Germany, around 60%(NaSBA, 2011 IN; McVitty and Building Societies Association, 2012); Hungary, 52%; France, 38%; Sweden, 30%; and in the 'transition countries' of Eastern Europe, self-provision generally represents over 50% of housing supply (Dol and Haffner, 2010 IN; Wallace et al., 2013, p. 16).

Self-provision is commonly acknowledged to represent between 7% (Homebuilding & Renovating Market Research, 2013; Miles and Whitehouse, 2013, p. 25) and 10%(McVitty and Building Societies Association, 2012; NaSBA, 2008, p. 10) of new-built UK housing supply³, although the figure varies significantly between the devolved regions of the UK, as low as 4% in Wales and as high as 25% in Northern Ireland (AMA Research, 2011 IN; Architecture Centre Network, 2012).

Although precise comparative evidence is relatively out of date⁴, the pervasiveness of self-provision in housing supply internationally is confirmed anecdotally and acknowledged by the central UK

¹ Please refer to 'UK Housing Crisis' in this study.

² Please refer to 'Self-Provided Housing' in this study.

³ It is possible to account for the discrepancy between figures using separate auditing for the UK and for England, with the 10% figure normally representing an average of the figures for the devolved regions of the UK. England is below the UK average, typically cited as 7%, whilst Northern Ireland is significantly above average at 25%, dragging the figure upwards.

⁴ Although Homebuilding & Renovating Market Research produces up-to-date, quarterly figures for self-build completions in the UK, most sources regularly quote data from the 1990s when making international comparisons. The original data, appears in Duncan and Rowe (1992), and is referenced by the Building & Social Housing Foundation (Eccleshare et al., 2005). It is this latter study that has significantly influenced advocacy work conducted by the National Self Build Association(NaSBA, 2008, 2011), that has in turn influenced reports and policy documents issued by the UK Government(DCLG, 2011). It forms the basis of the 'ubiquitous blue graph' (See NaSBA, 2008, p. 10 for an example.) that usually forms part of the introduction to presentations by the National Self Build Association (NaSBA) and, increasingly, other significant individuals and organisations within the sector. The most up-to-date survey of available comparative data for self-provided housing between the UK and Europe exists in the Centre for Housing Policy's

Government (DCLG, 2011), which published its own research into international self-build housing practices (NaSBA, 2011, pp. 6–7; Owen et al., 2011), in association with the National Self Build Association (NaSBA), in the preparation of its most recent Housing Strategy (DCLG, 2011).

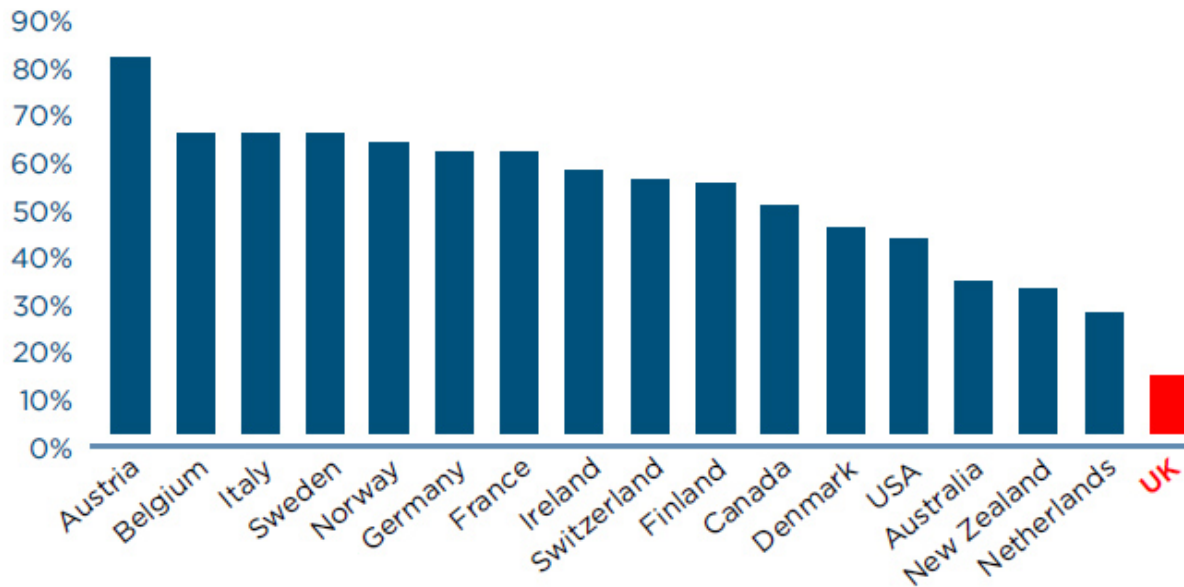


Fig.2 - The proportion of all homes delivered by self-build in the UK is low - Illustration taken from the Self Build Government-Industry Working Group report 'An Action Plan to promote the growth of self build housing', published by NaSBA (2011, p. 6) which represents the 'ubiquitous blue graph' (See NaSBA 2008, p.10 for an example) that usually forms part of the introduction to presentations by the National Self Build Association (NaSBA) and, increasingly, other significant individuals and organisations within the sector. It is based upon relatively out-of-date comparative data from the 1990s, although the figure for the UK is corroborated by regular domestic market research (Homebuilding & Renovating Market Research, 2013).

Dol et al. (2012) observe that 'historic developments within the housing and planning systems, the propensity of the government to provide housing, and the emergence of large volume housebuilders and/or local commitments to the ethos of home ownership may all be important factors' that why often quite similar countries have such large differences in the incidence of self-provided housing, although definitive answers remain unclear (Wallace et al., 2013, p. 16).

In a significant number of comparable countries - such as Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, France, Australia, Ireland and the USA - the pervasiveness and resilience of self-provision as a means of procuring housing is dependent upon a number of critical factors:

1. **Popular Culture and Know How about Self-Provision** - In many cases, self-provision has remained a part of popular culture, representing a 'normal' thing to do⁵. The means of accessing land, finance and development partners is more widely known amongst citizens. This results in relatively healthy proportions of home that are self-procured, like, for instance, 80% of homes in Austria. NaSBA also attribute regional variation of the pervasiveness of self-provision within the UK to local cultural tradition, for example, in the way that local planning

'Build-it-yourself?' report, published jointly by the University of York and Lloyds Banking Group (Wallace et al., 2013, p. 16), which references data from Housing Statistics In The European Union 2010 by Dol and Haffner (2010). However, this data uses a definition of self-provision that varies from country to country and generally restricts such definitions to include only single private dwellings. As such, the available data is unlikely to reflect the true extent of comparable self-provided housing between European countries. Available comparative data for countries beyond the European Union seems to be restricted to that used by NaSBA, derived from the work of Duncan & Rowe (1992).

⁵ This has been particularly well-documented in Germany (Chan, 2010a, 2010b; NaSBA, 2011, p. 6) and Argentina (Redstone, 2012; Redstone et al., 2013), whilst the National Self Build Association and Self Build Government-Industry Working Group highlight the occurrence of self-provision in Ireland, Australia, the Netherlands and the USA (NaSBA, 2011, pp. 6–7).

policy in Northern Ireland- in which self-provision contributes around 25% of housing supply (AMA Research, 2011 IN; Architecture Centre Network, 2012) - is more likely to be 'light touch' and reflect a cultural heritage of self-provision (NaSBA, 2011, p. 6).

2. *Culture of the Industry* - In comparable countries, like Germany, Austria and the Netherlands, the supply-chain for the house-building industry is more visibly orientated towards self-provision, with 'home manufacturers' and small builders being more familiar with dealing directly with clients on a 'custom build' basis. Offsite manufacturing is also much more common - including partnerships between home manufacturers and designers - and forms part of a supply-chain set up to directly serve self-providers. This represents a significant enabling factor, saving time and money on site and reducing risk to self-providers (Miles and Whitehouse, 2013 IN; Self Build Portal, 2013).
3. *Leadership and Political Will* - In comparable countries, strong, local political leadership is often a critical factor in creating opportunities for self-provision on a large-scale. This is usually achieved through the allocation of land by local authority for self-provided house-building. Anecdotally, local authorities in comparable countries - such as the Netherlands and Germany - are also used to using their land-holdings and powers of land allocation to achieve wider policy objectives beyond providing housing⁶, and are more used to dealing with individual households or self-providing groups directly in terms of land sales, managing development or providing infrastructure (Brinkley, 2013; Brown, 2013; Hill, 2013; Zogolovitch, 2013a),

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⁶ An example of this would be the way that local authority used house-building to directly 'skill-up' local 'building communities' (self-building groups that form development companies with assistance from the municipality) in order to build local development capacity through policy. The strategy is implemented by making use of a Städtebauliche Entwicklungsmassnahme ("Urban Development Act", S165 BauGB) which allows a municipality to remain in control of the development process. This mechanism can be invoked by a Local Authority "wherever it is required to serve public needs ... especially an increased need for housing and employment opportunities" (BauGB S165.3.2) and "where the same objectives cannot be achieved through conventional contracts (with a developer) (BauGB S165.3.3)". (CABE, 2011).

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This excerpt is taken from www.collectivecustombuild.org and forms a single element of a wider research study. Please visit the website or contact us at collectivecustombuild@sheffield.ac.uk for more information.



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