



Council Housing and Culture: The History of a Social Experiment (Planning, History and Environment Series)

Alison Ravetz

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Born of idealism, and once an icon of the Labour movement and pillar of the Welfare State, council housing is now nearing its end. But do its many failings outweigh its positive contributions to public health and wellbeing?

Alison Ravetz here provides the first comprehensive and apolitical history from which to arrive at a balanced judgement. Drawing on the widest possible evidence, from tenant and government records to the built environment itself, she tells the story of British council housing, from its seeds in Victorian reactions to 'the Poor', in philanthropy and model villages, Christian and other varieties of socialism. Her depiction of council housing in its mature years shows the often bizarre persistence of 'utopian' attitudes (whether in architectural design or management styles); its rise to a monopoly position in working-class family housing; the many compromises consequent on its state finance and local authority control; and the impact on working-class lives as an intellectuals' 'utopian dream' was converted into a social policy for the masses.

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