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The opportunity and desire to buy: owner-occupation in Scotland's new towns, c. 1950-80

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3 **The opportunity and desire to buy: owner-occupation in Scotland's new towns, c. 1950-**
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10 **Abstract**
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12 *This article explores the role of the post-war new towns in Scotland in providing people with*
13 *the opportunity to own their own homes. Most importantly, it traces the development of this*
14 *policy prior to the 'Right to Buy' of the early 1980s when tenants were offered substantial*
15 *discounts by local authorities, housing associations and crucially, new town development*
16 *corporations. The article challenges the dominance of rented tenure in existing accounts of*
17 *Scottish housing, showing that there was demand in Scotland in the decades before the*
18 *introduction of incentives. This article takes a 'top down' and 'bottom up' approach to*
19 *understand a period of expanding opportunity for some, though not all, of those relocating*
20 *and starting new lives in East Kilbride, Glenrothes and Cumbernauld. Archive evidence*
21 *exploring policy and the response of the new town development corporations is*
22 *complemented by analysis of life narratives provided by those that moved to the new towns*
23 *and their children. In doing so, this article contributes to a growing scholarship that*
24 *challenges stereotypical perceptions of class and identity in the immediate post-war decades*
25 *whilst also revealing new insights into the post-war state as an enabler of opportunity for*
26 *some.*
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51 **Keywords:**
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54 Owner occupation; housing; new towns; Scotland; postwar
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3 In autumn 1970, a heated debate burst forth in the local newspapers in the Scottish new town
4 of East Kilbride.¹ Its focus was the sale of housing built by East Kilbride Development
5 Corporation, originally for rent, but which the Development Corporation – the unelected
6 body responsible for planning and building the new town – was now offering for sale. This
7 policy was publicly opposed by the (elected) Burgh Council, which called for an end to what
8 it called ‘random’ sales. The Corporation held firm, referring to ‘a cardinal and important
9 point of policy’ on which ‘positive action must be taken’.² It was not the first time that its
10 housing policy had provoked an angry response. From a different perspective, owners on a
11 new estate built for sale in the town had, four years earlier, picketed the show flat when it
12 transpired that the Development Corporation planned to rent out any houses which remained
13 unsold.³

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31 The vast majority of new dwellings in the thirty-two towns ‘designated’ across the United
32 Kingdom between 1946 and 1973 were initially rented from their respective Development
33 Corporations. This housing has rightly been emphasised in the existing literature on the new
34 towns, reflecting not only its dominance in the new towns but also, more generally, the way
35 in which the construction of subsidised rented housing formed the cornerstone of mass
36 housing policy in England, Wales and especially Scotland between the 1920s and the 1980s.⁴
37
38 Although the pattern of provision varied across Scotland, many of the country’s local
39 authorities (and Glasgow in particular) built up large stocks of housing after 1919. These
40 houses were often made available to tenants at very low rents. From the late 1930s, rented
41 public-sector housing was also constructed by the Scottish Special Housing Association
42 (SSHA), a government body; the post-war new towns added a further source of rented
43 housing.⁵ However, although renting was normalised across the social spectrum in twentieth-
44 century Scotland, the example from East Kilbride with which this article opens suggests an
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3 alternative perspective. There is a different history of housing in the Scottish new towns, one
4 which involved the promotion of home ownership alongside provision for renting, and, which
5 also importantly, reflected demand. This history begins well before the 'Right to Buy' of
6 1980 allowed the tenants of rented public-sector housing nationwide to buy their home at
7 substantial discounts.
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17 In exploring owner-occupation in the Scottish new towns before 1980, we recognise that
18 owner-occupation and the role of the private sector in Scottish housing have not been ignored
19 by historians. Annette O'Carroll has considered housing in twentieth-century Edinburgh,
20 where the local authority was less active in providing housing than its Clydeside equivalents
21 and preferred instead to subsidise owner-occupation; Yvonne McFadden has investigated
22 owner-occupation in suburban Glasgow; Miles Glendinning and Diane Watters have
23 produced a detailed history of one of the country's largest housebuilders, Mactaggart and
24 Mickel, shedding important light on the extensive suburban estates which sprang up on the
25 fringes of Glasgow from the 1930s onwards.⁶ However, discussions of owner-occupation in
26 the new towns remain relatively marginal, despite the fact that forms of tenure other than
27 renting – especially owner-occupation – loomed increasingly large in policy and practice.⁷
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42 The new towns that were designated in the late 1960s were planned to include more
43 properties for sale than those begun in the 1940s and 1950s; in parallel, house sales in those
44 earlier new towns were facilitated.⁸ These policies applied across England, Wales and
45 Scotland, though the target set for owner-occupation was lower in Scotland. This difference
46 can be explained in part by the way in which Scottish housing policy was devolved to the
47 Scottish Office in Edinburgh; their decision to set a lower target in turn reflected the tradition
48 of renting. Nonetheless, the fact that the Scottish Office was keen to promote owner-
49 occupation can be conceived as a critique not only of the municipal rented sector but also as
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3 an attempt to bring Scottish housing patterns into line with those prevalent in England and
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5 Wales. It also responded, as we shall see, to a growing body of evidence which showed that
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7 tenants were interested in buying.
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12 Six new towns were designated in post-war Scotland. Like new towns elsewhere in Britain
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14 (and beyond), they were conceived in ‘decentralist’ terms, namely as places which would
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16 receive what was termed ‘overspill’ population (especially from Glasgow, parts of which
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18 were then severely overcrowded and dominated by poor-quality housing). They would also
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20 promote the redistribution of industry away from existing centres. A rhetoric of
21
22 ‘modernisation’ surrounded the Scottish new towns, which were increasingly viewed by
23
24 policymakers and planners as places which could attract new industries, boosting the
25
26 economy (especially of Clydeside, hitherto dependent on heavy industry).⁹ They would offer
27
28 a new image of Scotland and would transform the outlook, health and lives of their
29
30 residents.¹⁰ It is significant that they were the creations of central government: indeed, in
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32 some quarters, they were seen as a direct attack on Scotland’s local authorities, not least the
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34 powerful Glasgow Corporation, which was in the late 1940s and 1950s a staunch opponent of
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36 new towns policy.¹¹ Nonetheless, Scotland’s first new town, East Kilbride was begun in
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38 1947. Glenrothes followed in 1948, intended to serve a new coalfield in Fife which never
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40 came to full fruition. It was followed in 1955 by Cumbernauld. There were three further new
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42 town designations in Scotland: Livingston (1962), Irvine (1966), and Stonehouse (1973, de-
43
44 designated in 1976).¹² Although in their central-government origins the new towns embodied
45
46 ‘top-down’ planning, they also reveal ‘bottom-up’ demand and the agency enjoyed by some
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48 individuals and families. The new towns typically did not rehouse those who lived in the
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50 poorest conditions. Those choosing to relocate, especially in the early years, first had to
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52 secure employment before being allocated a house. The relatively high rents charged in the
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3 new towns, compared with municipal provision elsewhere, meant that those moving to the
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5 first new towns of the 1940s – known as the ‘mark 1’ generation – were often drawn from the
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7 skilled working-classes and middle classes. These were aspirational people who responded to
8
9 the opportunity to start new lives with new jobs, in high-quality new houses: indeed, the
10
11 specific opportunity of a house, with its own front and back door, and a garden, was a
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13 particular attraction for those moving from Glasgow tenement flats.¹³ Despite the Scottish
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15 tradition of renting, it is therefore not surprising to find that, by the late 1960s, some of these
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17 people wished to buy their home.
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24 New town residents’ desire to ‘get on’ was reflective of changing social identities and a
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26 demand for a better quality of life. Alistair Kefford has argued that from the late 1950s the
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28 government positioned ‘the recipient of housing policy as a consuming individual’.¹⁴ In the
29
30 context of the Parker Morris committee’s report on housing standards, published in 1961, he
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32 argues that ‘by promoting individual consumer choice, as a guarantee of healthy subjectivity,
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34 the committee implicitly challenged the very bases of universal forms of social provision’.¹⁵
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36 The example of the new towns bears out the same idea. For those ‘consuming individuals’
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38 able and willing to move, the new towns offered attractive opportunities, from the late 1940s,
39
40 well before Parker Morris; these opportunities would come to include home ownership. Such
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42 an interpretation of post-war policy – as the provider of selective opportunity and facilitator
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44 of individuals’ agency, rather than something universal – might be thought to suggest the
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46 tenuousness of the social-democratic settlement, perhaps also implying long roots for the
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48 market liberalism of the 1980s: significantly, the period in which Right to Buy was
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50 introduced. Yet, it is hardly accurate to interpret the Welfare State as incubating, parasite-
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52 like, the seeds of its demise. Echoing the arguments of Guy Ortolano, it is more accurate to
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54 see this period as one characterised by a dynamic social democracy.¹⁶ This dynamism, and
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3 the ideological adaptability which underpinned it, is particularly evident in the built
4 environment. Britain's urban centres were remodelled by a coalition of public- and private-
5 sector bodies to accommodate perceived consumer and business needs, while housing design
6 was informed by changing expectations relating to such things as consumer goods or
7 increased privacy.¹⁷ In this respect, Kefford's emphasis on the 'consuming individual' as the
8 basis of modern citizenship is important in that it recognises the agency possessed by
9 individuals and the ways in which this agency was facilitated by the state. The normalisation
10 of home ownership by government policy by the mid 1960s even where, as in Scotland, it
11 remained the minority tenure, provided increased choice for those consuming individuals
12 who wanted to buy their homes.
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29 In supporting individual ambition with respect to housing tenure, encouragement of
30 ownership perhaps even contributed incrementally to what Robinson et al describe as 'the
31 rise of popular individualism' whereby it is argued that individuals of all political persuasions
32 increasingly desired more self-determination in their lives, especially in the 1970s in the face
33 of growing economic and social uncertainty.¹⁸ An aspirational form of individualism is
34 certainly encouraged by government policy makers and new town development corporations
35 in enabling and encouraging home ownership, and arguably greater personal autonomy, from
36 the late 1950s onwards. Yet the individual aspiration which resulted in home ownership did
37 not necessarily result in disengagement from the community. As Lawrence has recently
38 explored, understandings of 'community' were complicated and evolving in the light of
39 growing affluence after 1945. Individual social aspirations for improved standards of living
40 continued to coexist with the continuity of a more traditional collectivist sense of
41 obligations.¹⁹ In the new towns, new communities were formed in which more traditional
42 values and forms of community could survive alongside more aspirational desires, which in
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3 turn cut across and complicated class identity.²⁰ Consideration of owner occupation in the
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5 new towns before 1980 therefore sheds light on class identity, especially in a Scottish context
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7 where upwardly mobile working-class and middle class values and identities are largely
8
9 absent in the historiography of twentieth century Scotland.
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14 The article is in two parts, ranging across architectural, urban and social history and focusing
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16 on East Kilbride, Glenrothes, and Cumbernauld. The first part explores policy discussions to
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18 highlight how and why home ownership was encouraged in the 1960s and 1970s. The second
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20 part considers both the response of the development corporations and the lived experience of
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22 those who bought. This analysis utilises archival evidence, including early social scientists'
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24 findings, as well as more recent life-history narrative interviews with twenty-six residents of
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26 the early new towns, including 'pioneers' who moved to these towns between the 1950s to
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28 early 1970s and the generation who grew up in the 1960s and 1970s. This methodology
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30 allows a new understanding of the motivations of these actors, long-term retrospective
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32 reflections from those who became homeowners, as well as the social implications of these
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34 changes on everyday life in the new town.
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45 **Policy and the supply of housing**

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49 In November 1965, the Minister for Housing and Local Government at Westminster, Richard
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51 Crossman, met with Britain's building societies.²¹ Crossman reported that he was keen to
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53 encourage the construction of housing for sale, seeing it as an essential component of the
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55 drive to build substantial amounts of housing across England and Wales (for which he had
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57 ministerial responsibility). He had the new towns in his sights as places with particular
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3 potential in this respect. His aim, he suggested, was to move the English new towns from
4 some 80% rented housing and 20% owner occupation to a more even split. Crossman
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6 subsequently formalised his proposals, seeing them as part of a broader political shift: 'I am
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8 also on the way to changing the Labour Party's attitude to owner occupation,' he wrote in
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10 1965.²² A Ministry paper of March 1967 proposed that the new towns designated after 1961
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12 should plan for 50% owner-occupation, and that an increase should also be sought in the
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14 earlier new towns.²³ A circular followed, suggesting that private enterprise should build two-
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16 thirds of owner-occupied houses.²⁴
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24 While Crossman did not have ministerial responsibility for Scotland, his proposals were
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26 echoed by Willie Ross, then Secretary of State for Scotland, who proposed an increase to
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28 25% ownership in the Scottish new towns.²⁵ This divergence reflected the lower proportion
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30 of owner-occupation in Scotland generally: the 50% figure applied in England was based on
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32 the then level of private ownership there (c. 47%).²⁶ The figure was adopted after some
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34 debate. It was suggested that the higher rents which existed in the Scottish new towns,
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36 relative to other public-sector housing, implied the potential for higher levels of owner-
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38 occupation.²⁷ However, the Scottish development corporations pointed out the practical
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40 difficulties of increasing levels of owner-occupation, especially in the case of East Kilbride,
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42 which was understood to be nearing completion (in terms of its population target).²⁸ The
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44 intention that Cumbernauld and Livingston would accommodate Glasgow overspill was also
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46 noted; it was seemingly expected that incoming Glaswegians would not be able to afford to
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48 buy. It was also noted that, Scotland-wide, there had been limited take-up of what housing
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50 had already been built for sale in the new towns.²⁹
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3 Policymakers' interest in owner-occupation in the new towns fitted into a longer history of
4 public-sector intervention in housing provision. Although the nationwide rise after 1918 of
5 council housing is well documented, and, as has been noted, had fundamental effects on the
6 landscape of west-central Scotland, private-sector housing for owner-occupation was also
7 implicated in the debates.³⁰ During the Second World War, for example, the Scottish Housing
8 Advisory Committee advocated an increase in the number of houses built for sale, noting that
9 Scotland 'lagged very far behind England' and arguing that ownership represented 'an
10 expression of [...] individual aspirations' as well as promoting sound citizenship, greater
11 responsibility, and civic stability.³¹ The recommendations of the Reith committee, which
12 underpinned the New Towns Act of 1946, and applied to Scotland as well as England and
13 Wales, called for owner-occupation as well as the provision of rented housing, not least in the
14 interests of a socially balanced community.³² In the event, controls on building meant that
15 rented housing dominated the 'mark 1' new towns of the late 1940s and early 1950s.³³ The
16 provision of rented housing by the Development Corporations responsible for each new town
17 nonetheless had practical advantages, ensuring compliance with the masterplan and the high
18 design standards that were often prized. It also formed a way to make sure that housing was
19 allocated to those who worked in the town, a key consideration given the conception of the
20 'mark 1' new towns in terms of self-containment and a corresponding desire to avoid them
21 becoming commuter dormitories.

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49 In England and Wales, the construction of housing for sale was encouraged by the
50 Conservative government after 1954, and by the 1960s formed a key plank of the rhetoric
51 around housing 'numbers' in which both major parties in London sought to promise ever-
52 greater numbers of new homes. However, as had been the case in the 1920s and 1930s, new
53 housing in Scotland during the 1950s and 1960s continued to be dominated by the activities
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3 of the public sector: the local authorities, the SSHA, and the new town development
4 corporations. That said, this sector was not homogenous in its outlook and approach. The
5 SSHA was treated sceptically by some local authorities, which saw its centralised operation
6 as a 'trojan horse' intruding into their domain.³⁴ The SSHA's estates also served as a critique
7 of municipal design as well as local-authority rent levels, which often were very low. SSHA
8 rents were higher and were deliberately increased on several occasions in order to set an
9 example.³⁵ In a similar way, the new towns could be understood as a response to local-
10 authority approaches. The Scottish Office, like the Reith committee, was critical of the large
11 inter-war municipal estates and was clear that the new towns should offer an example for
12 others to follow: in housing a 'balanced community', rather than a single class; and in terms
13 of design quality.³⁶ In this context, the promotion of owner-occupation by Ross and others
14 might also be considered as a further attack on municipalism. (In addition, the dominance in
15 the new towns of terraced houses rather than the flats hitherto typical of urban Scotland was
16 also significant, being potentially an attempt to re-form the country's housing on what might
17 be considered 'English' lines – echoing the way that the 1917 Ballantyne report on Scottish
18 housing had advocated the construction of garden-city inspired cottages in place of
19 tenements.)

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45 Ownership also remained associated with responsible citizenship. The notion of a 'property-
46 owning democracy' was increasingly articulated from the 1950s. In 1967, for example, a
47 study of Development Corporations across Scotland, England and Wales reported their
48 frequent belief that increased owner-occupation would prompt greater 'civic interest and
49 responsibility'.³⁷ It was suggested that 'one might expect the leaders ... to come from the
50 owner-occupier because of the greater powers of leadership derived through strength of
51 character, education, wealth or other factors'.³⁸ Indeed, in 1966 Glenrothes Development
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3 Corporation considered it 'essential for the well-being of the town, that every effort be made
4 to retain such families in residence within the town' as 'success in this direction would instil
5 considerable confidence in the working population'.³⁹ Meanwhile, the 'Official Guide' to
6 East Kilbride in 1972 saw benefits on both sides: ownership would 'give the citizen a bigger
7 stake in the town, at a cost which gives him a sound investment'.⁴⁰
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11 Sales were also associated with the ideal of a balanced community, drawn from across the
12 social classes – the principle which had fundamentally informed the Reith committee's initial
13 conception of the post-war new towns. Reference was made in East Kilbride in 1959 to the
14 need to attract 'managerial' residents, whether as owners or tenants, while in 1962 it was
15 reported that Corporation policy was to increase the number of homes for sale in order to
16 achieve improved social balance.⁴¹ There was some concern that these residents would
17 otherwise leave East Kilbride, because it was assumed that ownership was their eventual
18 goal, even if they rented initially.⁴² Reference was made in 1965 to the need to 'stem the flow
19 of highly desirable citizens', presumably to the suburbs of south Glasgow and east
20 Renfrewshire, because they were unable to buy in the new town; the notion of civic
21 leadership is perhaps implicit in mention of 'highly desirable citizens'.⁴³ In 1969, of the 885
22 households which left the new town, 242 became owner-occupiers in nearby areas.⁴⁴
23 Similarly in 1967 Glenrothes Development Corporation described the 'five o'clock executive
24 exit' as one of the town's 'most intransigent problems'. It was found that the new town was
25 competing with the attractions of nearby cosy villages and seaports in the County of Fife,
26 which appeal to 'many executives who have come to work in the town'. 'Socially', there was
27 'a need to encourage such people and their families to live within its boundaries'.⁴⁵
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29 Meanwhile, in 1978 Cumbernauld Development Corporation actively sought to present the
30 town as a place where executives and their families would thrive both at work and play in
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3 their advertising publication ‘The Businessman’s Tour of Cumbernauld’.⁴⁶ Notably the
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5 variety of housing types was emphasised including ‘houses for sale and houses for rent’.⁴⁷
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10 There were also more tangible motivations. The ‘Guide’ to East Kilbride also reported that
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12 housing sales would also reduce the Development Corporation’s housing deficit.⁴⁸ In this
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14 respect, the financial advantages of owner-occupation appealed to policymakers. In
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16 December 1965, James Callaghan, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, drew Crossman’s
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18 attention to the rapidly increasing cost of the new towns programme, predicting annual
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20 expenditure of some £200 million by the mid 1970s and proposing that private developers’
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22 contributions would have to increase if this level was to be supported.⁴⁹ The issue would be
23
24 compounded by the way that the new town designations of the late 1960s envisaged towns of
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26 a significantly larger size than those begun in the 1940s, in part in response to a belief that the
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28 population was increasing rapidly. Furthermore, Parker Morris space standards – as
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30 documented in the 1961 report *Homes for Today and Tomorrow* – became mandatory in the
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32 English and Welsh new towns from 1967,⁵⁰ and were echoed in Scotland. Their generosity of
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34 space, coupled with the high design and landscaping standards encouraged by the
35
36 development corporations, added to the expense of the new towns. Given ‘the mounting scale
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38 of public investment’, and with the monetary challenges looming which ultimately led to
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40 devaluation, an internal minute of July 1967 referred to the Treasury’s wish to ‘move forward
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42 quickly to more effective expenditure control’ in the face of ‘rapid growth in past and
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44 prospective New Towns expenditure’.⁵¹
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53 In response, there were proposals for organisational innovation. In 1967, it was suggested
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55 that some new towns could be built by a new kind of public-private partnership, in place of
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57 the usual development corporation.⁵² Developing this line of thinking, the stillborn
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3 Stonehouse new town was conceived in 1971 with a development corporation that would co-
4 ordinate ‘different design agencies’, potentially giving much more scope to the private sector,
5 rather than taking an all-encompassing role.⁵³ In addition, the substitution of private-sector
6 loans for Treasury subsidies could be understood as ‘part of the wider needed to divert a
7 substantial proportion of building society funds into relieving public sector expenditure’.⁵⁴
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9 With few development corporations generating a surplus on their housing accounts, land
10 sales might produce a profit, while residents who left rented houses would be releasing their
11 previous home, effectively reducing the number of new rented houses necessary.⁵⁵
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13 Furthermore, it was hoped that competition between builders might lower costs.⁵⁶ One
14 wonders if it was also hoped that this same competition might also push up land values, and
15 the resulting return to the Treasury.
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31 Policymakers also had growing evidence that owner-occupation was sought by two key
32 groups: first, those who might invest in the new towns; and second, those who lived there (or
33 might live there). As far as the first was concerned, a particular concern, especially in
34 Scotland, was a sense that widespread provision of rented housing could compromise the role
35 which was increasingly ascribed to the new towns, namely economic growth and the
36 attraction of new (perhaps international) employers. The Toothill report of 1962 promoted the
37 idea of ‘economic growth points’, and while this idea waxed and waned in official thinking, it
38 remained important, with the Scottish new towns being seen as motors of economic change.⁵⁷
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40 The West Central Scotland Plan of 1974, for example, emphasised the value of the new
41 towns within the country’s continued economic modernisation.⁵⁸ However, within the
42 Scottish Office, it was felt at the start of the 1970s that the dominance of public-sector rented
43 housing in many areas was holding back the country’s economic potential:
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3 there is no logical reason for maintaining the divergence or indeed for continuing to
4 pursue policies which positively encourage public sector building at the expense of
5 the private sector, and we think some stimulus to owner-occupation is required if the
6 tenure differences between Scotland and the rest of Britain are not to continue to
7 grow. We did not debate at length the effect of a low level of owner-occupation upon
8 the Scottish economy, but it is generally thought to be a disincentive to potential in-
9 coming employees.⁵⁹

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11 In this respect, questions of tenure were bound up with wider questions of the image of
12 central Scotland: 'the businessman sees many of the built-up parts of the region as unpleasant
13 places to which to move his family'.⁶⁰ Despite the high standards often achieved by the
14 development corporations in their rented housing, civil servants and development corporation
15 officials alike sometimes noted the difficulty in finding purchasers for the kind of
16 contemporary designs favoured in the public sector, such as 'Radburn' layouts in which roads
17 were pushed to the rear of properties. Purchasers wanted 'non-Radburn houses or any
18 accommodation which looks different from standard [Development Corporation] houses'.⁶¹
19 Terraces – often valued by new town planners for their 'urban' quality – were thought
20 especially unlikely to sell, and in addition, it was noted in 1968 that building societies were
21 often reluctant to lend on 'unorthodox designs' featuring such things as flat roofs.⁶²
22 Development Corporation officials sometimes engaged in subterfuge when showing
23 prospective employers around, presenting nearby middle-class owner-occupied suburban
24 areas as part of their realm. East Kilbride's George Young recalled that 'we would [...] bring
25 them out from the airport via Newton Mearns and Clarkston and so on, which they all
26 thought was part of East Kilbride.'⁶³

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3 In addition, there was also evidence that owner-occupation was, at least in theory,
4 increasingly attractive to new town residents. In February 1966, the housing policy
5 researchers J.B. (Barry) Cullingworth and Valerie Karn were commissioned by the Ministry
6 of Housing and Local Government, in consort with the Scottish Office, to produce a study of
7 housing tenure and management in the new towns across Britain; East Kilbride formed one of
8 their case studies.⁶⁴ Although the study was not initially concerned with owner-occupation,
9 the researchers found that residents had strong views on the subject.⁶⁵ In England, there was
10 ‘considerable support for the extension of owner occupation in the new towns’, especially
11 among younger and more affluent tenants.⁶⁶ Support was admittedly lower in Scotland, but
12 remained significant.⁶⁷ Cullingworth and Karn concluded that ‘if action is to be based on
13 what people want, the policy should be to increase owner occupation and thereby reduce the
14 size of the public sector’.⁶⁸ While such a move was understood as a way to make the new
15 towns more ‘normal’ tenure wise (their term – and one which confirms the Anglocentric
16 basis of the policy vis-à-vis Scotland), the recommendation was clearly one of providing
17 opportunities and responding to demand: the most desirable model of new town tenure would
18 offer the ‘widest range of choice to the consumer; meets needs of all groups in community;
19 least charge on public funds but also assists those who cannot afford housing of the standard
20 determined politically as being acceptable’.⁶⁹ Yet, as Cullingworth and Karn noted, the actual
21 cost of purchase was beyond the means of many.⁷⁰ In Scotland, low public-sector rents had
22 historically made renting attractive, but despite a deliberate increase in rents from the mid-
23 1960s, there was no corresponding increase in owner-occupation; indeed, the proportion was
24 falling on account of the continued large-scale programmes of comprehensive redevelopment
25 and new town construction.⁷¹ Rising incomes after 1969 and revised affordability tests
26 suggested that the situation might change in the 1970s, and a working group was set up ‘to
27 investigate ways of assisting people to become owner-occupiers in Scotland’.⁷²
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6 A particular problem within a Scottish context was a lack of affordable existing housing in
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8 the lower-medium price range, the consequence in part of low levels of private-sector house-
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10 building since 1918.⁷³ In tackling this issue, the new towns would have a particular role.

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12 First, as we have noted the construction of housing for sale within the new towns assumed
13
14 increasing prominence in planning documents and policymakers' discussions, in Scotland as
15
16 also across England and Wales. Yet, actually delivering this policy was challenging, as was
17
18 recognised as early as 1968. One difficulty comprised the design standards often expected by
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20 Development Corporations, who were often reluctant to allow provision below that found in
21
22 their own rented housing and which therefore made housing expensive, perhaps too
23
24 expensive to attract buyers, as housebuilders complained to government.⁷⁴ Builders also
25
26 reiterated that buyers wanted housing distinct in style and layout from that provided by the
27
28 development corporations.⁷⁵ In response, the Ministry criticised 'undue insistence on full
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30 Parker Morris standards' as well as strict aesthetic controls, suggesting that private housing
31
32 might add 'variety and interest'.⁷⁶ By October 1968, a compromise had been proposed,
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34 involving the preparation of planning briefs rather than detailed specifications.⁷⁷

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36 Development corporations were to encourage the 'highest possible standards of layout and
37
38 house type consistent with the price level aimed at' [emphasis original].⁷⁸ The onus was
39
40 shifted to purchasers, who were to be presented with a choice: either a well-specified rented
41
42 house, or the purchase of a house to which they could potentially add features, such as central
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44 heating, a garage, or an extension.⁷⁹ In essence, standards would be lowered to make housing
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46 affordable.

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48 The construction of estates of new housing for sale was, however, not the only route to
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50 increased owner-occupation. A more marginal (though nonetheless significant) second
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3 approach was to sell plots for one-off designs, typically by better-off residents. There was
4
5 also a third approach, especially in the 'mark 1' towns where reduced levels of future
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7 building were expected. According to the Ministry's 1967 circular, 'one obvious way of
8
9 increasing owner-occupation would be by the sale of existing rented houses to sitting or other
10
11 tenants'.⁸⁰ The Scottish Office echoed this line of thinking, seeing new town housing (and
12
13 council housing, and housing by the SSHA) as having the potential to plug the deficiency of
14
15 recent middle-income, 'second-hand' housing for sale: 'the supply of houses for owner-
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17 occupation in the middle price range can be increased [...] draw upon the stock of existing,
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19 currently rented local authority and New Town houses of suitable quality and make them
20
21 available for sale'.⁸¹ New Town housing was considered as something distinct from local
22
23 authority provision, and thus could legitimately be sold. The latter was presented (not least by
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25 Crossman) as comprising housing at moderate rents for those who needed it, and which
26
27 should therefore remain in public ownership; council tenants who wished to buy in
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29 'established' towns could buy from an ample supply in a way that was not the case in new
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31 towns.⁸² (This line of thought evokes the evolving 'residualisation' of council housing,
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33 which, as John Boughton has argued, developed from the 1950s and came to be particularly
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35 associated with the 1980s.⁸³) In the early 1970s, with rents increasing in response to
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37 legislation passed by the Heath government, it was suggested that higher-income households,
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39 in particular, would feel incentivised to buy, though there was also concern to avoid a sense
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41 that tenants were being 'blackmailed'.⁸⁴ Sales would thus answer the perceived desire for
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43 owner-occupation, uncovered by Cullingworth, and would potentially halt the drift of those
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45 who wanted to buy outside of the new towns.
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56 Selling hitherto rented houses was financially advantageous – at least for central government.

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58 New town development corporations typically received an Exchequer subsidy for each rented
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3 house, a flow of money which would stop upon sale; however, the capital invested in the
4
5 house would be recovered.⁸⁵ Only if a subsidy or development corporation loan was provided
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7 to the purchaser would public funds continue to be involved, but even then, there could be a
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9 saving, as the Scottish Association of Registered Housebuilders argued:

12 The total [rent] subsidy per dwelling coming into occupation at the present time, from
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14 local rates and from grants from Central Government, is in the order of £300 per
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16 annum in Scotland. This goes in year after year for sixty years, i.e. £18,000. A once
17
18 only cash subsidy with suitable safeguards of say £500 would bridge the cash-on-
19
20 entry gap and would be a tremendous saving to both the tax and the rate-payer.⁸⁶
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23 Such a perspective was unsurprising, in view of the interests of the Association, but civil
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25 servants came to similar conclusions. Despite the loss of rents and the impact on Exchequer
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27 of second mortgage tax relief, 'we found that in every case there is a net benefit to the public
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29 sector from the sale of a rented house'.⁸⁷
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35 The sale of new town housing would thus provide a pool of well-designed, recently built
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37 family housing which might underpin Scotland's continued economic development as well as
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39 the social diversity of the new towns. Sales were key to the image, and perhaps the reality, of
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41 a modern Scotland, and were understood in terms of providing new choices to residents as
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43 well as satisfying their ambitions. Although there might be a case for keeping the new towns
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45 distinctive, essentially conceiving tenants' choice of tenure at a regional level (i.e. rent in a
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47 new town, or buy elsewhere), sales were presented as a way to 'normalise' the new towns.⁸⁸
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51 In reality, sales were slow. It also appeared that all but a minority of tenants lost their
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53 enthusiasm for buying when confronted with the high sale prices that were associated with
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55 the high standards in recent rented housing.⁸⁹ There was continued evidence of the desire of
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57 potential buyers to purchase housing which looked different from their existing rented home.
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3 A survey in East Kilbride in 1970 revealed that only 20.7% of tenants would buy their current
4 house if given the chance, whereas 60.7% expressed interest in housing built by private-
5 sector developers.⁹⁰ Nonetheless – as the next section of this article will discuss – sales did
6 take place, and in increasing numbers.
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17 **Implementation and Demand**

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21 Interest in owner-occupation began early in the life of the new towns. East Kilbride's 1956
22 Annual Report noted that 500 sites had been reserved 'for those who prefer to own their own
23 homes', with fifty applications being received.⁹¹ Private development was slower in
24 Glenrothes.⁹² Nevertheless by 1958 'a small site' in Alburne Park was being prepared for
25 private construction and 'other private parties had reserved sites in this locality' as there
26 appeared to be 'demand for better class houses, either for sale or for rental'.⁹³ Cumbernauld
27 Development Corporation considered provision for owner occupation from 1962 and four
28 years later increased the housing allocated in the town for owner occupation from 5% to 17%
29 minimum.⁹⁴ It briefly considered participation in an experiment proposed by University of
30 Edinburgh researchers, in which three identical clusters of housing would be built: one for
31 rent, one for sale, and one for management by a housing co-operative.⁹⁵ The goal was to test
32 and compare these different forms of tenure. (In the event, only the housing for rent was
33 built.)
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53 The sale of plots for one-off designs was a constant in all of the towns. In East Kilbride land
54 was allocated on various sites, but particularly in Thorntonhall, where an estate of large,
55 bespoke houses was brought into being, creating in essence a new village a short distance
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3 from the town. Within East Kilbride itself, the St Leonards neighbourhood was conceived as
4 a higher standard residential area. In 1966, 161 plots were identified there, along with thirty-
5 seven plots in the Westwood area, all for houses in the £5000-6000 range.⁹⁶ In addition, the
6 Development Corporations also built housing for sale. In East Kilbride, they included some
7 200 houses in the Westwood area, for which 700 enquiries were received; 100% mortgages
8 were available.⁹⁷ Attractive sites for private houses were also located in several areas of
9
10 Glenrothes with the Corporation also building 72 houses for sale in 1968 'to meet the rising
11 demand',⁹⁸ while sites were made available in the Park area of Cumbernauld.⁹⁹
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24 Builders also constructed estates of houses for sale. In East Kilbride, Wimpey was active at
25 Calderwood in the late 1950s and thereafter turned its attention to Birniehill,¹⁰⁰ while
26 Laidlaw built 75 houses with a stylish open-plan hall at Hairmyres in 1966.¹⁰¹ However,
27 relations between development corporations and builders were not always smooth. East
28 Kilbride Development Corporation's insistence on a certain standard of design did not always
29 find a favourable response from builders, who feared that the additional expense that might
30 be involved would be commercially unviable.¹⁰² In Glenrothes private developments were
31 more modest in size with the development corporation approving an estate of twenty houses
32 at Braid Drive in 1966, although it was expected that 'from enquiries received' demand for
33 land for private housing would increase considerably.¹⁰³ In Cumbernauld private builders
34 were involved at Abronhill and Condorrat in the 1960s.¹⁰⁴
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51 The sale of rented housing was also discussed on numerous occasions. In East Kilbride, 'a
52 major campaign to promote the sale of existing houses to tenants' was mooted in 1966.¹⁰⁵
53 The Development Corporation noted that 'there can be no doubt that it is in the long term
54 financial interests of most families with good incomes to own their own houses and the
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3 increased proportion of private capital in housing will tend to accelerate the elimination of
4 the Corporation's deficit and release capital for other purposes'.¹⁰⁶ However, take-up was
5 initially low. In 1964, only around sixty tenants (out of 9000) were reported to be interested
6 in buying their home.¹⁰⁷ The issue – anticipating the findings of later surveys – was that
7 tenants were less keen on buying their existing home; they preferred to buy elsewhere. Thus,
8 despite their enthusiasm ('Buy your Houses, E.K. tells tenants', ran one 1966 headline),¹⁰⁸
9 the Development Corporation resolved to concentrate on building new houses specifically for
10 sale.¹⁰⁹ With increased targets for owner-occupation being cited in 1967, attention returned to
11 the question of sales. The Corporation reiterated its offer to sell any house to sitting tenants,
12 and by 1968 a scheme was in operation in which the Corporation undertook to buy back the
13 house within two years.¹¹⁰ By this date, some areas were also designated as priority areas for
14 sales.¹¹¹ Any house which fell vacant in these areas would be sold. This policy was
15 controversial, with some residents feeling that they were being encouraged to 'buy or quit'.¹¹²
16 As a result, a degree of neutrality was adopted at Calderwood X, which the Corporation
17 hoped would become 100% owner-occupied: 'In communications to tenants and others which
18 mentioned house purchase, the Corporation would not appear to persuade people to buy, and
19 statements which might give rise to recrimination later would be avoided'.¹¹³

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45 By 1968 Cumbernauld Development Corporation had also begun selling its housing, notably
46 at the Park 1 development, a desirable area of the town populated by professionals, where 22
47 of the 39 rented cedar-clad bungalows at had been sold.¹¹⁴ East Kilbride Development
48 Corporation in 1970 – echoing the increased (though still modest) level of interest in owner-
49 occupation revealed by Cullingworth – was able to refer to 'strong and expanding
50 demand'.¹¹⁵ That year, 61 tenants bought their homes; 47 bought other (previously rented)
51 houses elsewhere in the town with vacant possession.¹¹⁶ In Glenrothes by comparison the
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3 number of privately owned houses was again more modest at only 261, with only 8 sold to
4 sitting tenants and 25 sold with vacant possession during the year.¹¹⁷ The focus in Glenrothes
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6 remained on selling land to private developers to build housing for sale, both in medium and
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8 higher price ranges. Meanwhile, Cumbernauld Development Corporation had adopted a
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10 similar policy to that in East Kilbride and five specific areas of the town were identified as
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12 being suitable for the sale of houses to sitting tenants or on the open market after vacation by
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14 tenants. In 1970 it was judged that this approach was progressing well.¹¹⁸ In 1972 this scheme
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16 was deemed to be successful with ‘a constant flow of enquiries and over 90 houses sold in
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18 these areas so far’. Over 200 houses had been sold in total with ‘some 1,750 houses available
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20 to sitting tenants’.¹¹⁹
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29 Mortgages of up to 100% continued to be made available in East Kilbride at fixed interest
30 rates.¹²⁰ Further publicity was issued, coinciding with the economic boom of the early 1970s,
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32 and by 1973 annual sales had almost doubled with the level of owner occupation increasing
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34 (see Table 1).¹²¹ In 1972 Glenrothes Development Corporation also issued a ‘newsletter’
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36 promoting sale of houses and received over 400 enquiries.¹²² In the following year 367
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38 tenants bought their homes, resulting in an increase in owner occupation in the town with a
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40 total of 687 privately owned houses. In 1974 a further 229 corporation houses were sold and
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42 it was anticipated that the figure would have been higher if more houses had been available
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44 with sales restricted to sitting tenants only. Yet, home ownership remained lower than in the
45
46 other two towns. In Cumbernauld the ‘Corporation House Sales Scheme’ was ‘well
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48 established’ by 1973 with 707 houses being sold.¹²³ It was found that ‘the Building Societies
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50 were initially reluctant to make adequate advances to purchasers’ as ‘many of the houses sold
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52 were in areas in which there were few owner-occupied houses’.¹²⁴ As a result the Corporation
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54 supplied many of the mortgages required with an average of 96% of the value.¹²⁵ The same
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3 was true in Glenrothes in 1974 when the Corporation provided an average mortgage of 95%
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5 to those sitting tenants borrowing to buy their homes.¹²⁶ In this sense the development
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7 corporations in both Glenrothes and Cumbernauld also became ‘lenders of last resort’ in
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9 order to encourage sales.¹²⁷
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14 [insert Table 1 here - Table 1: Proportion of home ownership by year in East Kilbride,
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16 Glenrothes and Cumbernauld. Source Development Corporation Annual Reports (1972-
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18 1982)]
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24 In both East Kilbride and Glenrothes the economic slowdown of the mid-1970s led to a
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26 reduction in sales and the level of owner occupation increased more slowly. Glenrothes
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28 Development Corporation noted in 1977 that the level of owner occupation would not reach
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30 the target 25% until they were allowed to sell houses to sitting tenants at a discount on the
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32 market value.¹²⁸ This was felt to be of particular importance for ‘tenants of long standing’
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34 with ‘probably fewer working years to pay off a mortgage’.¹²⁹ Only in Cumbernauld did the
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36 proportion of owner occupation rise substantially in the late 1970s ‘despite high interest rates
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38 and the effects of the 3-day week’.¹³⁰ After controls on sales were lifted (and discounts
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40 introduced) following the introduction of the ‘Right to Buy’ in 1980 the proportion of owner
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42 occupation increased again in East Kilbride.¹³¹ That said, while Glenrothes experienced ‘an
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44 avalanche of enquiries’, owner occupation remained below the 25% target.¹³²
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51 Analysis of oral history life narratives of ‘pioneer’ buyers in the early new towns allows
52
53 further insight into the demand for home ownership in these years. Moreover, narratives from
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55 the second generation, their children, who grew up in these homes provides an indication of
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57 the social implications of ownership in terms of class identity. Motivations and desires for
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3 ownership are less clearly articulated by those buying their homes in the 1960s and 1970s
4
5 than those guiding policy at a national level or those implementing it. For example,
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7 Alexander was born in 1926 in Leith, a working-class area of Edinburgh. After war service
8
9 and establishing himself as a chartered accountant, he applied to join the finance department
10
11 at Glenrothes Development Corporation and moved to the town in 1959 with his wife and
12
13 young son. The couple had bought a house in 1954 in Kingsknowe, an Edinburgh suburb,
14
15 when they were first married, as it was 'ten years to get a council house'. However, they
16
17 wanted a newly built house; this was the 'big attraction of East Kilbride and Glenrothes'.¹³³
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19 Nonetheless, soon he also wanted to be a homeowner again:
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24 This was the first private development [in Glenrothes], so when I heard [about] it,
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26 when I saw they wanted to develop one, we went down to Kirkcaldy and had a look at
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28 the houses they built there, and said 'this is the house'. My wife thought I was ... not
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30 daft but a bit over the top. A smaller house would do, but I said 'no this is the best
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32 type and we're having it'¹³⁴
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35 They bought their house in Glenrothes in 1964. Alexander was just the sort of professional
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37 that the development corporation wanted to live in the town. When asked why he wanted to
38
39 buy, if this was because they had owned their house in Edinburgh, he simply replied 'yes'
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41 and moved the conversation on.
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46 Alexander's story demonstrates the way that, in a Scottish context, we know little about
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48 people's motivations for buying their homes in the immediate post-war decades. People find
49
50 it difficult to articulate why they wanted or decided to buy a house.¹³⁵ Such aspirations, while
51
52 not abnormal, were not the mass experience in Scotland prior to the 1980s and thus do not
53
54 easily fit with stereotypical representations of the urban experience in this period. The
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56 popular or collective memory of urban Scotland in the 1960s focuses on overcrowded
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3 housing conditions, often in tenements with shared back courts and communal toilets, and the
4
5 resulting slum clearance programmes. There is little opportunity for individuals to complicate
6
7 this by articulating memories of social mobility. Yet as Lynn Abrams et al have argued, in
8
9 the new towns people were able to 'remake themselves' and realise their ambitions free of the
10
11 prescriptive belonging of their former communities.¹³⁶ The elective belonging of the new
12
13 communities in the new towns enabled people to create new norms of behaviour where
14
15 aspiration was embraced.¹³⁷ Lawrence suggests, with reference to contemporary social
16
17 surveys of new and expanding communities in England, that in the 1950s and 1960s people
18
19 felt it was acceptable to be doing well for themselves as there was a sense of collective
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21 progress. He finds the 'reconciliation of personal ambition with collective progress' to be
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23 'the most striking feature' of testimonies from late 1950s Stevenage.¹³⁸ That people wanted
24
25 to do well but were happy for others to 'share the rewards of post-war affluence'.¹³⁹ Inherent
26
27 here is perhaps a feeling that everyone shared the opportunity to be doing well and thus
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29 individuals did not have to feel any guilt at their comparable 'success' in life.¹⁴⁰
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38 While individuals are capable of discussing the details of their housing journey, like
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40 Alexander they tended not to dwell on their reasons for buying their own homes. Jim, for
41
42 example, briefly provides a practical reason for buying a house in the 1970s. He moved to
43
44 Glenrothes in 1955 when he was thirteen years old. Jim, also a chartered accountant,
45
46 eventually with his own company in the town, decided to buy a house in 1973. His family
47
48 were living in a development corporation house and 'then I thought the way things are going,
49
50 I was quite happy cause I didn't have the money to rent the place and then I thought, you
51
52 know, the more things are going on more, you know, I should buy a house'.¹⁴¹ Essentially he
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54 felt that rent was increasing at such a rate that it would be practical to buy a house. Jim
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56 decided to 'put his name down' for a house in an area of the town that was built by a private
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3 housing developer. He did not consider buying the house that the family was renting. After
4
5 viewing he decided to buy the house that had 'a space at the side if I wanted to extend'. The
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7 house was smaller than he knew he needed in the long term but he could afford it and later
8
9 extend it. Again, as was the case for Alexander, these decisions were presented in the oral
10
11 history narrative as unremarkable. As professional men in the town, members of the middle
12
13 class, theirs were entirely normal decisions to make, not requiring further explanation. Many
14
15 of their peers may also have been buying homes, potentially in areas of private suburban
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17 developments or commuter villages where owner occupation was a more normal tenure
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19 type.¹⁴² It is also possible that it is difficult for people to reflect on their decision to buy a
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21 house when this is now so common.¹⁴³
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29 As discussed earlier, in all three of the early new towns in Scotland plots were made available
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31 to those who wished to build their own homes. While such self-builders were even more of a
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33 minority of homeowners in Scotland in this period, the freedom this approach allowed
34
35 individuals to realise their aspirations was significant, especially in enabling individuals to
36
37 express their desires for the home that they wanted. The new towns were important in
38
39 providing such opportunities for self-building. Andy moved to Cumbernauld with his family
40
41 in 1966. His parents were both civil servants relocated from London. Both were also active
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43 members of the Communist Party. Yet, their political beliefs did not prevent them from
44
45 designing and building their own house. Initially they had rented a flat from the development
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47 corporation in the relatively new area of Abronhill for a year or so. As Andy suggests:
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51 Cumbernauld was an exciting place at that time, in the sense that there were a lot of
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53 really interesting and skilled people in Cumbernauld, that were really committed to
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55 Cumbernauld. And so, part of that was also building houses, and people wanted their
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3 own unique houses and, you know, they had friends that were designers and architects
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5 and this, that and the other.¹⁴⁴
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8 While building your own house was not exactly ordinary, in Cumbernauld with its artistic
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10 scene and forward-thinking progressive architects,¹⁴⁵ it was not necessarily extraordinary
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12 either. The proportionately small middle-class professional and artistic community seem to
13
14 have supported each other in building their own unique houses. Andy suggested that the
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16 design of the house reflected the historical moment ‘in the sense that the house they designed
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18 actually had one door for the adults and a side door at the back for the children’. In his house
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20 ‘the children were in one part of the house and the adults were in the other, which would be
21
22 an anathema now [...] it was a different ethos then’.¹⁴⁶ Making such experimental designs a
23
24 reality was possible in the context of middle-class Cumbernauld in the 1960s. Moreover,
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26 Andy’s parents were putting down roots in the town, as he states ‘there was never any
27
28 question of moving. I mean, they were staying in Cumbernauld and this is...they were
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30 invested in staying in Cumbernauld, this is where we wanted to live’. Building their house
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32 arguably increased their stake in the town, or perhaps more accurately confirmed their
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34 commitment to the town.
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42 Sarah’s parents had moved to Cumbernauld in the early 1960s; she was born in 1962. They
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44 had moved from another new town, Harlow in Essex, where her father had worked for the
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46 development corporation as a civil engineer. Initially the family lived in East Kilbride before
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48 staff houses were completed in Cumbernauld. Her parents rented in Park Way (in Park 1), but
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50 bought a plot of land ‘like quite a lot of the others there’.¹⁴⁷ Sarah’s dad designed the house
51
52 himself with help from colleagues: ‘they crossed over’ and shared expertise. Their house was
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54 one of the first built on a street that went on to have ten self-built houses. Her dad liked the
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56 courtyard houses built in the town by the development corporation for rent but their plot was
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3 not wide enough 'so he had to adjust it'.¹⁴⁸ In the end he designed a bungalow and crucially
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5 'he just built it to suit the family really'. Sarah's mum still lives in the house. In order to buy,
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7 and in this case build, individuals were willing to live in houses with arguably lower space
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9 standards than those built by the development corporations. Ownership was the key desire
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11 and the development corporations provided this opportunity to ensure that the middle classes
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13 and professionals remained within the town rather than relocating, living outwith the town
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15 and commuting.
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22 However, in the new towns there was some evidence of consequences of the expansion of
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24 home ownership in the 1960s and 1970s. Sarah was not aware of there being class differences
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26 when she was at primary school stating 'I think as kids you just band together' and 'you
27
28 think, we're all the same, you know'.¹⁴⁹ However when she went to secondary school in the
29
30 mid 1970s she can 'remember getting a bit of hassle and getting really shocked when people
31
32 would pick on us a bit, because they'd call it spam valley or something'. She recalls 'people
33
34 shouting' and not understanding why until 'gradually, as you sort of got older, it meant, oh
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36 because you're in a private house'. Similarly, Alexander's son Fraser remembers that he
37
38 'wasn't aware of it being different but of course you're made aware of it quite soon, but
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40 where I grew up it was called 'Snobhill'.¹⁵⁰ He suggests that in Glenrothes 'I've not got a
41
42 typical experience' as he 'didn't grow up in a council house'. He felt there was a sense of
43
44 'we're all in it together except those people in the private' in the town. The balanced
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46 community which the development corporations sought to create inevitably would contain
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48 such tensions. Initially, in the early years of the new towns people of different socio-
49
50 economic backgrounds lived in the same few areas of the towns. However, as the towns grew
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52 and expanded distinctions were created with certain areas containing higher amenity rental
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54 housing for management or 'executives' and eventually privately built housing, corporation
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3 housing for sale, or plots for self-building as discussed. Some areas were considered 'better'
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5 than others as a result. A level of spatial segregation by class was increasingly evident in the
6
7 early new towns. In this respect the new towns were becoming more like other towns and
8
9 cities, where the area in which people lived became a marker of their socio-economic status.
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14 The increase in ownership in the early new towns in Scotland in the 1960s, but especially
15
16 1970s, coincided with growing societal inequality. Some of those who were doing well
17
18 financially were now able to buy property, but others in the town were struggling as
19
20 evidenced by mounting rent arrears.¹⁵¹ There are parallels here with Lawrence's argument
21
22 that the belief in collective progress for all was increasingly challenged in the 1970s in
23
24 England as it became clear that not everyone was benefitting from 'progress' as an
25
26 anonymous social force lifting everybody equally'.¹⁵² It was no longer easy for people to
27
28 explain their aspirational choices as a collective experience when evidence of inequality
29
30 became more obvious at a societal level. Echoing Lawrence's argument, this did not entirely
31
32 result in 'the triumph of individualism' and an abandonment of community.¹⁵³ Nevertheless,
33
34 the facilitation of owner occupation in the early new towns in Scotland made class
35
36 differences more obvious spatially by the late 1970s than they had been initially, and this
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38 arguably could lead to tensions within the community as described by Fraser and Sarah.
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47 Such tensions were also highlighted by the fact that not everyone was able to achieve all of
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49 their aspirations by moving to the new town. Phyllis's mum had grown up in Liverpool. She
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51 had moved to Scotland in the early 1950s after meeting Phyllis's dad while on holiday in
52
53 Ireland. Moving to a cramped tenement flat in Partick in Glasgow was a shock when she had
54
55 grown up in a large terraced house. When asked if her parents moved to Cumbernauld
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57 because they wanted to live in a house Phyllis responded 'I think probably, you know, that
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3 would have been their aspirations, probably they thought, they certainly weren't in the
4
5 income bracket that we could have afforded to buy, ever. My dad obviously worked hard, but
6
7 he had five mouths to feed'.¹⁵⁴ Her mum also worked in part time jobs when her younger
8
9 siblings went to school. Sarah suggests that her parents saw moving to Cumbernauld in 1966
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11 as 'a chance of improving their lot' and 'probably they thought it was a better quality of life'.
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13 They would have liked to own their own home but this was not a possibility until much later
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15 in their lives after the 'right to buy' enabled them to buy their home at a discount.
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24 **Conclusion**

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28 Although renting would remain the principal form of tenure in Scotland's new towns until the
29
30 1990s, reflecting the dominance of renting in twentieth-century Scotland more generally, this
31
32 article has shown that policymakers and some new town residents embraced the idea of home
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34 ownership well before the Right to Buy of 1980, for reasons ranging from perceptions of
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36 citizenship to the potential to diminish the tradition of low-priced municipal housing. It has
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38 shown how policy was enacted in the new towns, and, crucially, has considered the ways in
39
40 which these changes were navigated by individuals and families. In so doing, the post-war
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42 state, as mediated via the new town development corporations, emerges as an enabler for
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44 individuals' agency: offering opportunities in terms of housing, jobs and indeed a particular
45
46 lifestyle. This is not a story of equality for all as part of a universal social welfare settlement,
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48 but rather instead opportunity for those that were able to take it. For the government,
49
50 encouraging home ownership in the new towns 'normalised' housing tenure in these
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52 communities, bringing them more into line with other urban and rural communities, perhaps
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54 even introducing 'English' models of tenure to Scotland. The sale of new town corporation
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3 housing also had the added bonus of potentially reducing the housing deficits in each of the
4 towns as well as ongoing maintenance costs, while the funds raised could be used to support
5 new construction at a time when the expense incurred by the new town aroused concerns.
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7 The development corporations implemented these policies, recording varying degrees of
8 success in promoting ownership to reduce 'executive drift' and provide a greater sense of
9 belonging to, or stake in, the 'balanced community'.
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21 The new towns, as we have seen, attracted aspirational people on the basis of attractive new
22 housing and the potential for a better job. The oral history evidence highlights that
23 individuals saw buying a home, and even self-building a home, as 'normal' in the context of
24 the Scottish new towns. Short and practical reasons were given for wanting to become
25 homeowners: this was seen as an ordinary desire, even in a period when they would have
26 been in the minority. In particular this emphasises the significance of the early new towns in
27 providing individuals with the opportunity to self-build in an urban context. Yet, as
28 discussed, for the children of those relocating to the new towns and choosing to become
29 homeowners, the development corporations efforts to ensure their parents did not leave the
30 town to buy, to preserve the socio-economically balanced community, could lead to tensions.
31 Housing provision in the towns, and especially housing for sale, certainly created a hierarchy
32 of neighbourhood desirability which had initially been absent in the new towns.
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51 Our focus on the new towns as places of opportunity and aspiration (for some) does not
52 challenge existing perspectives which critique the Scottish new towns programme for
53 heightening disadvantage among those not able to relocate.¹⁵⁵ The 1960s were not universally
54 a time of 'never had it so good', as the 'rediscovery of poverty' in the emerging social
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3 sciences demonstrated. Yet, in order to understand the inequalities of the immediate post war
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5 decades, historians also need to focus on those who benefitted from the opportunities offered
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7 by the new towns – a focus which also counters any notion that the 1970s were a decade of
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9 ‘decline’.
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17 The value of the long historical perspective presented in this article is in tracking the impact
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19 of encouraging owner occupation prior to the ‘Right to Buy’. The disinvestment since 1980
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21 of the government in providing housing for rent has had profound consequences. Yet, the
22
23 earlier encouragement of home ownership through government policy highlights that the
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25 roots of this crisis were longer. The experimentation encouraged in the new towns in the
26
27 1960s and 1970s perhaps provided a warning of what would follow: not just in social terms
28
29 but in the denudation of carefully planned design. There are therefore lessons to be learnt
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31 from the discussions of policy makers, the implementation of policy by development
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33 corporations and the lived experience of residents of home ownership, in a period when the
34
35 supply and demand of private housing was more carefully managed and debated, crucially
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37 alongside the provision of good quality housing for rent.
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48 Notes

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51 ¹ “No sale” Plea after Corporation Houses Shock’, *East Kilbride News*, 6 November 1970.

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53 ² East Kilbride Development Corporation (EKDC), Minutes, 22 August 1967. South
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55 Lanarkshire Archives, East Kilbride.

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57 ³ ‘Picketing of Show Flat Continues’, *East Kilbride News*, 2 December 1966.
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⁴ E.g. Ortolano, *Thatcher's Progress*; Boughton, *Municipal Dreams*; Glendinning and Muthesius, *Tower Block*.

⁵ Begg, *50 Special Years*.

⁶ O'Carroll, 'Tenements to bungalows', 221-41; McFadden, *Creating a Modern Home*; Glendinning and Watters (eds) *Home Builders*.

⁷ Boughton, *Municipal Dreams*, 212-31.

⁸ Cullingworth and Karn, *The Ownership and Management of Housing*.

⁹ E.g. Department of Health for Scotland, *New Town at East Kilbride*, 12.

¹⁰ E.g. J.M. Ross memo, 20 February 1974. National Records of Scotland [NRS], SEP15/574.

¹¹ Gibb, 'Policy and Politics in Scottish Housing', 159-61.

¹² For Stonehouse, see Fair, 'Stonehouse: Scotland's last new town'.

¹³ Abrams et al., 'Aspiration, Agency and the Production of New Selves'; Abrams and Fleming, 'Long Term Experiences of Tenants in Social Housing in East Kilbride'.

¹⁴ Kefford, 'Housing the Citizen-Consumer', 228.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 247.

¹⁶ Ortolano, *Thatcher's Progress*, 21.

¹⁷ E.g. Saumarez Smith, *Boom Cities*; Kefford, 'Housing the Consumer-Citizen'; Fair, 'Privacy'.

¹⁸ Robinson et al., 'Telling Stories about Post-war Britain', 302.

¹⁹ Lawrence, *Me, Me, Me*, 230-36.

²⁰ See Abrams et al., 'Aspiration, Agency and the Production of New Selves'; also Phillips, Wright and Tomlinson, *Deindustrialisation and the Moral Economy in Scotland since 1955*, 155-56.

²¹ Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, 376.

²² *Ibid.*, 377.

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²³ Cullingworth, *New Towns Policy*, 429.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 430-33.

²⁵ 'Crossman Plan Aims to Make Home Owning Easier', *Times*, 25 November 1965.

²⁶ H.F.G. Kelly to P. Cousins, 16 February 1967. The National Archives, Kew [TNA], T224/1841.

²⁷ P. Cousins to S. Scott Whyte, [2 March 1967]. TNA, T224/1841.

²⁸ S. Scott Whyte to P. Cousins, 10 March 1967. TNA, T224/1841.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ For council housing: Boughton, *Municipal Dreams*; Dunleavy, *Politics of Mass Housing*; Glendinging and Muthesius, *Tower Block*.

³¹ 'Remits for Sub-Committees'. NRS, DD6/221; First Draft Report [May 1945]. NRS, DD6/230.

³² Ministry of Town and Country Planning / DHS, *Final Report of the New Towns Committee*, 9-11.

³³ Cullingworth and Karn, *The Ownership and Management of Housing in the New Towns*, 16-17.

³⁴ Begg, *50 Special Years*, 163.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 181-88.

³⁶ DHS, *New Town at East Kilbride*, 12.

³⁷ 'Interim Summary Report'. TNA, HLG115/798

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Glenrothes Development Corporation [GDC], Annual Report, 1966.

⁴⁰ East Kilbride Development Corporation [EKDC], 'Official Guide to East Kilbride' [1972]. East Kilbride Central Library, uncat.

⁴¹ EKDC, Annual Reports, 1959 and 1962.

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- ⁴² EKDC, Minutes, 12 January 1962. East Kilbride Central Library, uncat.
- ⁴³ EKDC, Annual Report, 1965.
- ⁴⁴ EKDC, Annual Report, 1969.
- ⁴⁵ GDC, Annual Report, 1967.
- ⁴⁶ Cumbernauld Development Corporation [CDC], Annual Report, 1978.
- ⁴⁷ CDC, *A Businessman's Tour of Cumbernauld* (Edinburgh: CDC, 1978) 10.
- ⁴⁸ EKDC, 'Official Guide'.
- ⁴⁹ 'Owner-occupation and the role of private enterprise', 14 March 1967. TNA, HLG116/323.
Also Cullingworth, *New Towns Policy*, 432.
- ⁵⁰ Harwood, *Space Hope and Brutalism*, 54.
- ⁵¹ Draft circular: 'Private Enterprise in New Towns'. TNA, HLG116/554; P. Cousins to A. Sylvester-Evans, 13 July 1967. TNA, T224/1841.
- ⁵² Note on Cost [Llantrisant, c. 1967]. TNA, T341/597.
- ⁵³ Derek Lyddon memo, 7 July 1971. NRS, SEP15/733; also Fair, 'Stonehouse'.
- ⁵⁴ Minutes of 23 July 1969. TNA, HLG116/552.
- ⁵⁵ E. Thompson to M. Stevenson, 1 January 1970. TNA, HLG116/552
- ⁵⁶ Draft Circular: 'Private Enterprise Housing in New Towns'. TNA, HLG116/554.
- ⁵⁷ Scottish Development Department, *Central Scotland: a Programme for Development and Growth*.
- ⁵⁸ West Central Scotland Plan Team, *West Central Scotland Plan*, 120.
- ⁵⁹ Draft Report. NRS, DD64/2382.
- ⁶⁰ West Central Scotland Plan Team, *West Central Scotland Plan*, 9 and 19.
- ⁶¹ Interim Summary Report 2 [November 1967], 58. TNA, HLG115/798.
- ⁶² Briefing Note for Lord Hughes, November 1968. NRS, DD6/4486.
- ⁶³ Interview with George Young, New Towns Record [Planning Exchange CD-ROM, 1996].

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⁶⁴ Cullingworth, *Ownership and Management*, iii.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 153.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 67 and 131.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 66.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 154.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 153.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 131 and 140.

⁷¹ 'The Market for Private Housing in Scotland' [October 1971]. NRS, DD6/2382.

⁷² Working Group Introductory Paper. NRS, DD6/2382.

⁷³ 1st Draft Report. NRS, DD6/2382.

⁷⁴ Draft Circular: 'Private Enterprise Housing in New Towns'. TNA, HLG116/554.

⁷⁵ Meeting with Scottish Association of Registered Housebuilders, 8 October 1970. NRS, DD6/4487.

⁷⁶ Draft Circular: 'Private Enterprise Housing in New Towns'. TNA, HLG116/554.

⁷⁷ Cullingworth, *New Towns Policy*, 444.

⁷⁸ Revised Draft Circular: 'Private Enterprise Housing in New Towns'. TNA, HLG116/554.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ New Town Circular 43: 'Owner Occupation in the New Towns', 1967. TNA, HLG116/552.

⁸¹ First Draft Report; Second Draft Report. NRS, DD6/2382.

⁸² New Town Circular 43: 'Owner Occupation in the New Towns', 1967. TNA, HLG116/552

⁸³ Boughton, *Municipal Dreams*, 144; See also Forrest and Murie, 'Residualisation and council housing' and Murie, 'Divisions of Home Ownership'.

⁸⁴ Minutes of 23 July 1969. TNA, HLG116/552.

⁸⁵ Note of meeting with Building Societies, 24 July 1969. TNA, HLG116/552.

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5 86 'Subsidies for Owner Occupiers', 21 January 1971. NRS, DD6/2383.
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7 87 'Study of Financial Benefits'. TNA, HLG116/552.
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9 88 Cullingworth, *New Towns Policy*, 441.
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11 89 E. Thompson to M. Stevenson, 1 January 1970; TNA, HLG116/552.
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13 90 'The East Kilbride Survey 1970'. East Kilbride Central Library, uncat.
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18 92 It was suggested that the 'high level of valuation' in the town deterred construction firms.
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20 GDC, Annual Report, 1954.
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22 93 GDC, Annual Report, 1958, 1959. The Department of Health for Scotland approved their
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24 proposals for the sale of houses in 1960. GDC, Annual Report, 1960.
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26 94 CDC, Annual Report, 1962 and 1966.
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29 95 Fair, 'Privacy'.
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32 96 EKDC, Annual Report,
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34 1966.
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36 97 '700 Inquiries for 200 Homes', *Scotsman*, 28 August 1964.
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39 98 GDC, Annual Report, 1968.
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41 99 By 1968 all of the 30 plots set aside in the Park area for owner-occupation had been sold,
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43 and over half of the houses were built or under construction. CDC, Annual Report, 1968.
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46 100 EKDC, Annual Report, 1959.
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48 101 *Glasgow Herald*, 9 May 1966.
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51 102 EKDC, Minutes, 26 June 1958 and 26 September 1958.
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53 103 GDC, Annual Report, 1966.
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55 104 CDC, Annual Report, 1968.
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57 105 EKDC, Annual Report, 1966.
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60 106 *Ibid.*

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7 108 'Buy your Houses, E.K. tells tenants', *Glasgow Evening Times*, 7 September 1966.
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9 109 Ibid.
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11 110 EKDC, Annual Report, 1968.
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17 113 EKDC, Minutes, 11 October 1966.
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19 114 CDC, Annual Report, 1968.
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21 115 EKDC, Annual Report, 1970
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23 116 Ibid.
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27 118 CDC, Annual Report, 1970 (and also 1971).
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29 119 CDC, Annual Reports, 1972.
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31 120 EKDC, 1970 Residents' Handbook.
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33 121 EKDC, Annual Report, 1973.
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35 122 GDC, Annual Report, 1972.
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37 123 CDC, Annual Report, 1973.
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39 124 CDC, Annual Report, 1973.
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41 125 CDC, Annual Report, 1973.
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43 126 GDC, Annual Report, 1974.
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45 127 Phrase first used in GDC, Annual Report, 1975 and CDC, Annual Report, 1976.
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47 128 GDC, Annual Report, 1977, point reiterated in 1978.
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49 129 GDC, Annual Report, 1979.
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51 130 CDC, Annual Report, 1980.
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53 131 EKDC, Annual Report, 1982.
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132 GDC, Annual Report, 1980.

133 Alexander, Interview with [redacted], Glenrothes, 9 November 2021.

134 Alexander, Interview with [redacted], Glenrothes, 9 November 2021.

135 See also McFadden, *Creating a modern home*.

136 Abrams et al., 'Aspiration, agency and the production of new selves', 600.

137 Savage, 'The Politics of Elective Belonging'.

138 Lawrence, *Me, Me, Me*, 102.

139 Ibid.

140 Although as Lawrence argues this 'vulnerable equilibrium' becomes increasingly strained or complicated by social and cultural changes during the 1960s. See Lawrence, *Me, Me, Me*, 103-63.

141 Jim B, Interview with [redacted], Glenrothes, 4 November 2021.

142 See Glendinning and Watters, *Home Builders*, esp. 285-86.

143 As at 31st March 2020 the Scottish Government estimate 58% of dwellings are owner occupied, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/housing-statistics-2020-2021-key-trends-summary/pages/6/> [accessed 19 January 2023].

144 Andy, Interview with [redacted], Cumbernauld, 31 May 2022.

145 Glendinning and Watters, 'Cumbernauld', 232-62.

146 Andy, Interview with [redacted], Cumbernauld, 31 May 2022.

147 Sarah, Interview with [redacted], Cumbernauld, 19 July 2022.

148 See more on courtyard houses in Cumbernauld see Fair, 'Privacy'.

149 Sarah, Interview with [redacted], Cumbernauld, 19 July 2022.

150 Fraser, Interview with [redacted], Edinburgh, 7 December 2021.

151 For example all three Development Corporations had implemented graduated rent schemes in the 1960s which meant supplementing those families with lower incomes. CDC,

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5 Annual report, 1963; EKDC, 1965; GDC, 1967. This was later replaced by the government's
6
7 national policy of paying rents directly for those in receipt of social security benefits through
8
9 the DHSS. Nevertheless rent arrears mounted and by 1982 a fifth of tenants in Glenrothes
10
11 were 'seriously behind' with their rent owing between £100 and £500. Arrears were less in
12
13 East Kilbride but had increased by 0.25 percent in 1982. GDC, 1982, EKDC, 1982.
14
15
16 Cumbernauld Development Corporation did not report arrears in its annual reports.

17
18 ¹⁵² Lawrence, *Me, Me, Me*, 163 and 193.

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20 ¹⁵³ Lawrence, *Me, Me, Me*, p. 194 and pp. 233-6.

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22 ¹⁵⁴ Phyllis, Interview with [redacted], 30 May 2022.

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25 ¹⁵⁵ Collins and Levitt, 'The 'modernisation' of Scotland'.

Table 1

Year	East Kilbride	Glenrothes	Cumbernauld
1972	8.8%	n/a	10.6%
1973	13.3%	n/a	15.2 %
1974	16%	11.35%	15.1%
1975	17%	12.1%	15.1%
1976	17%	13.2%	17%
1977	17.4%	13.62%	18%
1978	17.6%	14.78%	20.4
1979	18.4%	15.5%	24%
1980	21.4%	20.2%	28%
1981	24%	21.6%	29.9%
1982	28%	23.4%	33%

Table 1: Proportion of home ownership by year in East Kilbride, Glenrothes and Cumbernauld. Source Development Corporation Annual Reports (1972-1982)

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