

## UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management, Geneva, 08/09 Nov. 2017

### Second panel discussion 08Nov2017:

“How the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing inspired practical steps to promote sustainable housing at regional, national and local levels”

### Statement by Professor Brian Evans, the Glasgow School of Art

Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates and colleagues.

Thank you very much for this invitation to address the committee today.

Over the coming years, the practical steps that we can take to promote and implement the principles of the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing present most important opportunities and challenges.

I particularly like this quotation from the author, poet and farmer from Kentucky in the USA Wendell Berry (slide 2). He is quoting the environmentalist Paul Kingsnorth. One of the central themes of Berry's writing is turning advocacy into action. As Berry himself puts it “**too often there is someone else who needs to sort out the issue**”. In this this quotation, therefore, Berry calls on us all take responsibility for a small “**something**” in order to get “**somewhere**”.

Here are four key principles that impact on our work (slide 3). The first concerns the importance of the principle of integration and balance in delivering action pursuant on the 17 Strategic Development Goals and I have the honour to say something more about this during the Ministerial Session tomorrow.

The second principle is concerned with moving from the science that portrays housing as a commodity and moves instead to housing as the place where we live. This is not deny the research, analysis and evidence that is needed but it does advocate, as we did with the Regional Report on the UNECE a move to viewing housing as the place for living in the city.

The third principle concerns how we address transformation in the living environment – the human habitat and whether this can be achieved – as has been attempted in the advanced western economies – by the transformation of the housing market or whether results can be achieved by the transformation of place – or more likely by both together. I recently had the good fortune to attend the European Urban Forum in Prague and I was most impressed by the work undertaken in the peripheral housing estates in the Central European of the Czech Republic and Slovakia where transformation of place is intended to lead the transformation of the market. The final principle of concerns the importance of building a public dialogue across scales and across the scales of government and between the public and private sectors.

In our professional lives (slide 4) we move from research and understanding of issues to developing solutions, testing options and on to agreement and the refinement of proposals in order to formulate action. We need to shadow this professional process with a process of engagement – whether that is between the different scales of government (national, regional and local), between the public and the private sectors or between professionals and citizens in order to deliver the transformational change that the Geneva charter seeks to bring.

At the Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow University and the City of Glasgow we are delighted to have the opportunity presented by the establishment of a Geneva UN Charter Centre to work together over the next three years (slide 5). We have formulated three pillars for action: (1) innovative research, (2) capacity building amongst the players in public and private sectors and (3) the implementation of programmes designed to increase awareness and commitment to the ***Strategic Development Goals, Agenda 2030, the New Urban Agenda*** and ***the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing***.

Finally, we consider that one of the principal opportunities offered by the Geneva charter centres comes through networking with other centres throughout the UNECE and, through knowledge transfer, focusing on innovation, networking and dissemination of ideas and best practice.

Thank you.



UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC COMMISSION  
FOR EUROPE

## Committee for Housing and Land Management Panel Discussion

The Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing:  
practical steps to promote sustainable housing at  
regional, national and local levels:

Professor Brian Mark Evans  
The Glasgow School of Art

THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART GLASGOW  
URBAN LAB

**“When you take  
responsibility for a  
specific something ... it’s  
possible you might get  
somewhere.”**

**Wendell Berry/Paul Kingsnorth**



PRINCIPLES OF INTEGRATION & BALANCE

LIVING NOT HOUSING

TRANSFORMATION OF MARKET • TRANSFORMATION OF PLACE

CONVERSATION • ACROSS SCALE • ACROSS SECTOR



