

To Joseph Grima

Joseph Grima
Genoa, Italy

San Francisco, California
27 November 2014

Dear Joseph

'Take a flat that is one size smaller than what your parents accustomed you to' — I've pocketed that quotation from Le Corbusier you gave us.

If you have any further references (case studies or texts) on the concept of **home**, they'd be much appreciated. You understand better than I do the politics of house and home that have been playing out in Liverpool for some years now. I feel we need a wide range of conceptual tools in hand before engaging with those dynamics much further. Speaking of tools, the discussions during **The Resident** about use value and exchange value (not always by way of those terms) made an impression on me.

Your distinction between the house as a **tool** (with habitation as its primary function) and the house as an **asset** (with capital accumulation as its primary function), and the contemporary conversion of the former into the latter, and the psycho-social implications of that process — that was thought-provoking. As we said, the advent of Airbnb only accelerates the absorption of zones of intimacy into the financial system.

It was notable that several argued that there's still a **class** dimension to the relative notions of 'home'. Perhaps it was that 'house-as-tool' tracks a working-class set of values, and 'house-as-asset' tracks a middle-class set. I don't know what you'd say to that. I may have it wrong, in fact. The claim was stronger: that the social-psychological adherence to the concept of 'house-as-**home**' tracks working-class values. This might set up working-class home-building as a strategy for anti-capitalist (in relation to finance capitalism) activism. Or, equally perhaps, it would permit anti-capitalist activism to inhabit strategies in defence of the home.

Doubtless, the absorption of surplus space aligns with that of surplus labour. Uber targets those who are low paid and have schedules that include surplus time, like teachers, for example: they can spend it making money driving an Uber taxi. In San Francisco, it's part of the new service economy. Half the city is becoming the servants of the other half, whose wealth is generated by the invention of ever more encompassing ways of being served.

Google's [Ngram Viewer](#), which visualises the history of the prevalence of given words — that's always a conversation-starter. We see the increase in the use of the word 'home' since 1965, and especially since the mid-1990s, and we wonder how much of that is due to an increase in general references to the idea of home as, in recent decades, the experience of home (in any full sense) has become increasingly precarious, versus how much is due to the invention of a single term: 'home page' and its cognates.

Congratulations on your appointment as a curator of the Chicago Architecture Biennial. I look forward to seeing what you do there.

Thanks again, Joseph.

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PS: 'If data is the new oil then the home is the new Texas.'

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