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Designing Differently: the Self-Build Home

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Abstract

The act of self-building involves the conceptualization, design and building of a home through undertaking all or some of the activities directly, or indirectly, through the management and sub-contracting of the work. Of the 23,000 or so self-build homes completed in Britain each year, the vast majority are created without architectural services. While some projects are completed by households that have experience of the building profession and trades, the majority of self-builders, including those explored in this

article, can be described as amateur.

This article probes the experience of designing and making a home as an amateur, concluding that self-building is a complex and creative process leading to qualitative material outcomes (such as capital) and non-material ones (such as the development of self-identity and well-being). In shifting the concern of design history to everyday experiences and benefits of designing and making (the producing consumer), the article challenges the role and proximity of professionals and professionalism in these processes. The article finds that professionals are implicated in many aspects of the amateur's experience but there are few commercial models of professional-amateur engagement in the self-build industry that actively seek to nurture authentic and, in this case, individualized solutions to the built environment.

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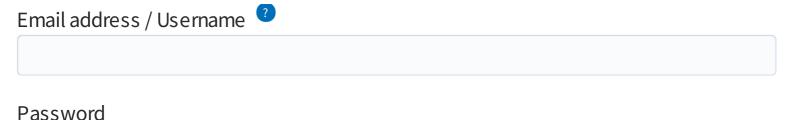
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