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Blandy, S. (2018) *Precarious homes: The sharing continuum*. In: Carr, H., Edgworth, B. and Hunter, C., (eds.) *Law and the Precarious Home: Socio Legal Perspectives on the Home in Insecure Times*. Oñati International Series in Law and Society . Hart Publishing . ISBN 9781509914609

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Precarious Homes: the Sharing Continuum

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This chapter examines sharing as a strategy for managing insecurities of the home, and the consequences of this response to the age of austerity. The role of law and government in enabling, regulating and managing how people share in relation to the home is analysed, bringing out the differential experiences of particular groups. A theoretical framework for understanding sharing as a continuum is applied to the lived realities of precarious homes. The chapter examines different forms of sharing in relation to the home, including sharing as a form of collective resistance to precariousness resulting from particular features of the contemporary economic, social and legal landscape.

Approaching precariousness from its opposite is a useful starting point: what would constitute a completely secure home? I hypothesise a home belonging to the outright owner of an island, living alone and financially unencumbered. There are no other island residents to deal with; nor are there any other potentially complicating property rights in the island, such as easements or leasehold interests; and no risk of losing the island to a lender, as the owner has no financial indebtedness secured against the home. The sea provides natural boundaries which eliminate the risk of disputes over or across boundaries with adjoining properties. This imagined completely secure home thus avoids the more common risks and causes of precariousness. Strikingly, these all arise from sharing property or property rights with other people or institutions. Sharing and precariousness of the home are evidently closely entwined.

In this chapter I have adopted Butler's distinction between precariousness (meaning uncertainty) and the concept of precarity which she uses to mean 'that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support more than others ... precarity is thus the differential distribution of precariousness'.¹ In relation to the home, some policies and practices discussed in this chapter have increased the precarity experienced by certain groups. Further, while precariousness is experienced individually, resistance to precarity is collective as it involves intentional sharing in the sense of participation in a demonstration or social movement. This chapter is also informed by the way in which Butler uses the concept of

¹ J Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2015) 33.

performativity - when 'an utterance brings what it states into being',² and its relevance to understanding the effect of words and actions in accessing, occupying and sharing residential space.³

Although the focus of the chapter is on the UK, there are many similarities across Europe and other developed countries where the welfare safety net has been, to a greater or lesser extent, withdrawn. An increasing number of people are experiencing their homes as precarious, following the 2008 financial crash.⁴ One-third of working families in England would not be able to pay more than one more month's rent or mortgage if the main earner lost their job.⁵ After housing costs, typical real incomes among low to middle income households and those aged 24-35 are no higher in 2016-17 than they were fifteen years earlier.⁶ Other key factors contributing to the precariousness of home include a more general move towards urban living with consequent higher density⁷ and scarcer housing availability. Increased property values now affect many areas in the UK, rather than being concentrated in London.⁸ Sharing residential accommodation may seem an ostensibly rational response to these larger forces. However, it is shown that such arrangements may actually increase precariousness of the home and occupiers.

A wide range of sources are used to illustrate the arguments in this chapter, which is structured as follows. First, I look at the idea of 'sharing', then I consider how 'home' is shaped by different tenures. The chapter then analyses a range of sharing property relationships within and around the home, and the different models and meanings of sharing with which these may be associated. The following section addresses political and protest alliances around housing issues, before conclusions are reached on sharing, precariousness and precarity in the context of the home.

Sharing

² Ibid 28.

³ Ibid 218.

⁴ Except for the top one per cent of the UK population, whose fast-rising incomes mean they have now recovered from the crash: Resolution Foundation, *The living standards audit 2017* (London, Resolution Foundation, 2017: www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/the-living-standards-audit-2017/).

⁵ BBC 'Many families could not afford a month's rent if they lost job – Shelter', 9 August 2016, www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-37017254

⁶ Resolution Foundation, *The Living Standards Audit*.

⁷ Office for National Statistics, *2011 Census: Population and Household Estimates for England and Wales*, March 2011,

www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/2011census/populationandhouseholdestimatesforenglandandwales/2012-07-16#how-densely-england-and-wales-were-populated

⁸ S Clarke, *Home ownership struggle reaches Coronation Street*, Resolution Foundation blog, 2 August 2016, www.resolutionfoundation.org/media/blog/home-ownership-struggle-reaches-coronation-street/.

The concept of the 'sharing economy'⁹ has been recently popularised, and accompanying legal expertise has been developed,¹⁰ so this section begins by considering its relevance to the issues discussed here. The term refers to digital platforms which enable 'access-based consumption transactions ... in which no transfer of ownership takes place'¹¹. For example, Airbnb, one of the most successful of these online enterprises, profits from both property owners and their guests, describing both as 'members of our global community'.¹² However, those sites which operate on the basis of economic exchange (such as Airbnb) have been described by Belk as 'a business relationship masquerading as communal sharing'.¹³ Both kinds of digital platform are considered here in relation to sharing and the home: those which operate on the basis of trust, and those run by profit-seeking entrepreneurs. The tendency of the latter to spot the commercial potential of the former and then adopt their ideas to establish 'pseudo-sharing' enterprises,¹⁴ is a contemporary phenomenon of which examples are identified in this chapter.

The nuanced, alternative meanings of 'sharing' shape my broader discussion and analysis of sharing and its consequences for precariousness of the home. The verb to share can mean 'a one-off allocation', such as the grant of property rights in the home; or it can refer to 'possession or use of a resource in common with others', such as when there is a continuing relationship between co-residents of a home or between people holding rights in the same property; and it can have the wider, more active meaning of 'to participate in or contribute to'. The chapter refers to and illustrates each of these meanings.

More generally, the idea of sharing usually conveys warmth, co-operation, and other similar positive values such as 'mutuality, trust and openness'¹⁵. Yet sharing may also imply discomfort, lack of privacy, and a lack of control over your home and possessions. The island home example has already highlighted the risks implicit in a range of sharing relationships with other people, whether a family arrangement or a more formal legal relationship with those holding simultaneous or subsequent rights in the same property, such as a landlord or mortgagee. These will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

⁹ A Sundararajan, *The Sharing Economy: the End of Employment and the Rise of Crowd-based Capitalism* (Cambridge MA, MIT Press, 2016).

¹⁰ J Orsi, *Practicing Law in the Sharing Economy: Helping People Build Cooperatives, Social Enterprise, and Local Sustainable Economies* (Chicago, American Bar Association Books, 2012).

¹¹ F Bardhi and G M Eckhardt, 'Access-based Consumption: the Case of Car Sharing' (2012) 39 *Journal of Consumer Research* 881, 881.

¹² Sign-off in email received from Airbnb by the author, an occasional user of the site.

¹³ R Belk, 'Sharing Versus Pseudo-Sharing in Web 2.0' (2014) 18 *Anthropologist* 7, 11.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ N A John, 'The Social Logics of Sharing' (2013) 16 *The Communication Review* 113, 128.

The theoretical framework for understanding sharing in relation to the home which is put forward in this chapter, explains sharing as a continuum. At different points along this continuum three different mode of sharing can be distinguished: *involuntary* (being forced into sharing by external circumstances); *uninformed* (sharing by choice, but without being aware of the implications); and *intentional* (a deliberate and positive choice to share, on the basis of full information). These are ideal types, with many possible variations and combinations along the continuum. Drawing on empirical research data from my study of shared residential space¹⁶ and on a wide range of sources from scholarly literature to social media, these models and meanings of sharing are applied here to everyday instances of sharing: homes, property rights and protests about housing insecurities.

Tenure and the home

To a lawyer, the most obvious cause of precariousness in the home is any tenure less than full ownership. Although the tenure of a home can undoubtedly make it more secure or alternatively more precarious, this chapter points to the additional effects of legislation, regulation, financialisation and governance, which are layered over tenure.¹⁷ The UK government's policies include the performative encouragement of home ownership by successive governments, to the extent that there is now a sense of shame involved in not being an owner-occupier.¹⁸ The effect has been to push up rates of owner-occupation to over 70% in the early 2000s.¹⁹ The ideals of control, autonomy and exclusion have become associated with the tenure of home ownership. The privately owned home is now equated with 'sovereign control over territorial space' at a domestic, personal scale.²⁰

However, an owner - occupied home may also prove precarious. Firstly, property rights are always 'shared' with the state, which may decide to exercise its rights such as compulsory purchase. In an unusual example from Guernsey, Mr and Mrs Gillow were refused a licence to occupy the home they owned. The language used by the European Court of Human Rights is telling. The state's action was described as transforming the

¹⁶ British Academy SG-45089, The role of legality in multi-occupied residential settings. All interview respondents quoted in this chapter are derived from this research project, unless otherwise stated.

¹⁷ See S Blandy, S Bright and S Nield, 'The Dynamics of Enduring Property Relationships in Land' (forthcoming) *Modern Law Review*.

¹⁸ D Cowan and M McDermont, 2006, *Regulating Social Housing: Governing Decline* (Abingdon, Routledge-Cavendish, 2006) 163.

¹⁹ S Clarke, A Corlett and L Judge, *The housing headwind: the impact of rising housing costs on UK living standards* (London, The Resolution Foundation, 2016: www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/the-housing-headwind-the-impact-of-rising-housing-costs-on-uk-living-standards/).

²⁰ K and S F Gray, *Elements of Land Law*, 5th edn (London, Butterworths, 2009) 105.

home from a resource which should provide 'personal security and well-being' into its opposite, something 'precarious'.²¹ Secondly, and far more commonly, the owner-occupied home risks becoming precarious because of money borrowed by way of mortgage. A 'one-off allocation' of property rights means that the mortgagor and mortgagee in effect share the same property. Their different but simultaneous 'rights of property are ... a bundle of powers, capable of being separately enjoyed'.²² Thirdly, the owner's home can become precarious because of unpredicted life-changing events such as illness, divorce or redundancy. Fourthly, uncontrollable external events, for example changes in interest rates, may affect the owner-occupied home, whether freehold or leasehold tenure. A time-limited leasehold estate is by definition more precarious than freehold ownership. Even where the owner has a 999 year lease of their home, a greater 'estate' or bundle of rights in the property is held by someone else, usually the freeholder but possibly also by an intermediate superior leaseholder.

Shorter term tenancies are also a leasehold interest, in property law terms. Housing legislation has introduced many variants of this tenure. The social rented sector encompasses two types of landlord: local authorities and housing associations (now officially known as Private Registered Providers) which both once let properties on lifetime 'secure tenancies',²³ making this the least precarious tenure in the UK. However, precarity has subsequently been introduced into this sector through sequential legislation establishing a range of increasingly insecure tenancy types. First, the Housing Act 1998 introduced 'assured tenancies' with less security for new housing association tenants. Then, with the Housing Act 1996, came 'introductory tenancies' for local authorities (the equivalent for housing association tenancies were 'starter tenancies') with no security for the first year of occupation. The possibility of insecure 'demoted tenancies' was established by the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003; Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights can only be used to challenge a decision to demote a tenancy in 'very highly exceptional cases'.²⁴

'Flexible tenancies' of a maximum of five years were introduced by the Localism Act 2011, ending the concept of the lifetime tenancy in the social rented sector. The much-contested Housing and Planning Act 2016 has brought in mandatory five-year fixed term tenancies. At the same time, financialisation of the housing association sector (discussed by Goulding, this volume) has seen many instances of displacement of

²¹ *Gillow v UK* [1986] 11 EHRR 335, at [55] and [57].

²² Sir H. S. Maine, *Village-communities in the East and West* : six lectures delivered at Oxford (London, John Murray, 1881) 133-4.

²³ Housing Act 1980.

²⁴ *Manchester CC v Pinnock* [2010] UKSC 4, Neuberger LJ at [53].

existing tenants under the banner of regeneration.²⁵ Despite these legislative changes and increasing precarity in terms of security of tenure, there were 1.18 million households on the waiting list for social rented sector homes in England.²⁶ There are now fewer of such homes as the social rented sector has shrunk considerably over the past few decades, from 31% of all households in 1980 to 17% in 2015-16.²⁷ This decrease is 'due to Right to Buy sales and the large-scale voluntary transfers of local authority stock to Private Registered Providers'.²⁸

In contrast to the social rented sector, the private rented sector has dramatically increased its share of the residential market, from 10% in 2002 to 20% in 2015-16.²⁹ Ironically, nearly 40% of former council properties bought under the Right to Buy³⁰ are now rented out by private landlords, at much higher rents.³¹ Much media and popular attention is paid to 'Generation Rent', young people under 40 who share rented housing in non-related groups of a similar age. In fact, the largest demographic group living in the private rented sector is single people under the age of 65; 'it is not possible to identify whether [their choice to do so] is elective or forced'.³² However, one factor is likely to be due to fewer houses being available for purchase, at higher prices. The proportion of owner-occupying households has fallen off markedly from its 2003 peak of 71%, to 63% in 2015-16,³³ the same rate as in 1986. This decrease affects not only London where most would-be buyers are priced out of the market, but unexpectedly, also the traditionally cheaper areas of the North and the West Midlands.³⁴

The private rented sector provides the most precarious homes in terms of security, and is known for its poor conditions and high rents. The standard form of private tenancy is a six month 'assured shorthold' which the landlord can terminate on two months' notice, without any need to prove fault such as rent arrears; and there is little or no rent control.³⁵ A particular sector of private tenants, migrants to the UK, suffer an extra

²⁵ See for example, S Hodkinson and C Essen, 'Grounding accumulation by dispossession in everyday life: The unjust geographies of urban regeneration under the private finance initiative' (2015) 7 *International Journal of Law in the Built Environment* 72.

²⁶ Department of Communities and Local Government, *Local authority housing statistics: year ending March 2016* (London, DCLG, 2016).

²⁷ Department of Communities and Local Government, *English Housing Survey Headline Report 2015-16* (London, DCLG, 2017).

²⁸ DCLG, *Local authority housing statistics: year ending March 2016*, 1.

²⁹ DCLG, *English Housing Headline Report 2015-16*, 2.

³⁰ Introduced by the Housing Act 1980.

³¹ P Apps, 'Revealed: 40% of ex-council flats now rented privately', *Inside Housing*, 14 August 2015.

³² N de Noronha, 'Living in the private rented sector: changing patterns of solo living?', (2014) 111 *Radical Statistics* 21, 33.

³³ DCLG, *English Housing Headline Report 2015-16*, 5.

³⁴ S Clarke, 'Home ownership struggle reaches Coronation Street'.

³⁵ Housing Act 1988, as amended.

layer of precarity under the Immigration Acts 2014 and 2016: landlords are now required to check immigration documents, and can evict on a month's notice anyone without 'right to rent' due to their immigration status.³⁶ The unpopularity of the private rented sector is remarkable. When asked to explain why they felt it was unlikely they would buy a home in the future, two-thirds of renters said they wanted to but were unable to afford it; only 1% preferred the flexibility of renting, and only 9% liked their current rented home too much to move.³⁷

The UK government policy on the de-regulation of short-term rented accommodation in London³⁸ has embraced the possibilities that the sharing economy may bring. A report commissioned by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills suggested that the development of digital platforms can unlock under-used assets, for example empty spare rooms.³⁹ Occupiers of such accommodation will be licencees, rather than tenants. Licensees have no property rights, just a personal right to occupy the property without any security of tenure at all. In the UK, the most common type of licence arrangement is where a lodger lives in the home of their landlord or landlady; they can be asked to leave immediately if there has been a serious breakdown of the relationship of trust. This makes their position precarious, irrespective of the risk factors associated with sharing.

It is difficult to categorise trespassing, more commonly known as squatting, as a type of tenure. It is now a criminal offence⁴⁰ and an extremely precarious way to occupy a home (see further Kirton-Darling, this volume). Apart from the constant threat of eviction, nearly six hundred homeless people were arrested by the police and at least two hundred prosecuted, with fifty-one convicted, between 2013 and 2015.⁴¹ However, given the cost and scarcity of housing, it is understandable why some people turn to squatting in empty accommodation. In the final section of the chapter, squatting is considered again, as a collective political protest and response to precarity.

³⁶ C Vargas-Silva, Briefing: Migrants and Housing in the UK: experiences and impacts (Oxford, Migration Observatory, 2015: www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/migobs/Briefing%20-%20Migrants%20and%20Housing%20in%20the%20UK.pdf).

³⁷ Department of Communities and Local Government, English Housing Survey: First Time Buyers and Potential Home Owners Report, 2014-15 (London, DCLG, 2016).

³⁸ Department of Communities and Local Government, Promoting the sharing economy in London: Policy on short-term use of residential property in London (London, DCLG, 2015).

³⁹ D Woskow, Unlocking the sharing economy: An independent review (London, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2014: www.gov.uk/government/publications/unlocking-the-sharing-economy-independent-review).

⁴⁰ Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012.

⁴¹ SQUASH (Squatters' Action for Secure Homes), Homes, Not Jails (SQUASH, 2015: www.squashcampaign.org/docs/Homes%20Not%20Jails_SQUASH%20April%202015.pdf).

This section has summarised the various tenure sectors which may provide homes, and different degrees of security. If one building is shared by occupiers with such different property rights, it becomes almost impossible to manage effectively. At the time of writing, the terrible tragedy at Grenfell Tower in Kensington and Chelsea had recently revealed how fatally precarious for all residents such circumstances could be. The mix of residents there included ‘social tenants, long leaseholders, private tenants, lodgers and many other, less formal arrangements’⁴² such as illegal subletting or sofa-surfing, all sharing the same tower block as home.

Sharing relationships and the home

The chapter now looks at different scenarios of sharing, moving spatially outwards from intimate relationships, through households, to sharing space and facilities within and around the home, and finally to shared boundaries between the home and other properties.

Sharing a bedroom and the home

Sharing the home with an intimate partner should represent an ideal form of intentional sharing, in the sense of possessing and using resources in common. But a high degree of risk is involved: what happens if the relationship breaks down, particularly if the home is owned in one person’s sole name, and particularly if the couple are not married? The emotional difficulties of relationship breakdown and practical difficulties of finding alternative accommodation are exacerbated by the inadequacies of the law to deal effectively with the property rights of cohabitants.⁴³ Court decisions are gender-biased against women, whose economic position is still weaker than men’s.⁴⁴ Women also suffer disproportionately from domestic violence, which is a significant cause of homelessness.⁴⁵ The risks associated with intimate relationships in the home are differentially distributed between the genders in a clear instance of precarity.

Financial considerations can lead to continued, enforced, sharing of a home in which there is no individual private space, with a partner from whom you would rather separate:

⁴² Helen Carr, ‘Grenfell Tower and the unravelling of forty years of housing ideology’ (Kent University, Countercurrents: <https://blogs.kent.ac.uk/countercurrents/2017/06/21/grenfell-tower-and-the-unravelling-of-forty-years-of-housing-ideology/>).

⁴³ House of Commons Library, “*Common Law Marriage*” and *Cohabitation*, *Briefing Paper 03372* (London, House of Commons, 2016).

⁴⁴ S Wong, ‘Would You “Care” to Share Your Home?’ (2007) 58 Northern Ireland Law Quarterly 268.

⁴⁵ Department of Communities and Local Government, *Statutory homelessness and homelessness prevention and relief*, England: January to March 2017 (London, DCLG, 2015) 6.

... often what keeps people together is money. Living in London, in particular, is so gallingly expensive, I can see why if you lived with the monetary cushion of a partner, the leap to solo occupancy could seem incomprehensible. Impossible even?⁴⁶

Enforced sharing of a different kind is revealed by analysis of the traffic on digital platforms set up to facilitate finding accommodation. This shows that rented accommodation in London has become so scarce and expensive that some tenants are sharing their bedroom with strangers, restricting personal space to a bunk bed. On the SpareRoom site⁴⁷, searches of this kind increased by 71% in the two years to 2015, while over 93,505 adverts were placed on Kangaroom⁴⁸ by people looking to share twin or even triple bedrooms in 2014, an increase of 48% over the previous year.⁴⁹ The degree of precariousness is inevitably much greater when the tenant shares a bedroom in a rented house with a person or people previously unknown to them.

Living as a household

Sharing an owner-occupied home as a family, or a rented home with one or more friends, sounds like a successful form of intentional sharing. However, these scenarios may disguise some very precarious homes, which challenge the third meaning of sharing as participation and contribution.

The 'full-nest' household of different generations sharing a privately owned home is by no means a new phenomenon, but due to the economic recession and high property values for scarce accommodation the number of 20 to 34 year olds living with their parents has increased by 20 per cent, since 1997.⁵⁰ Half a million people, more than a quarter of that age range, have either never left the parental home or have returned there. Research found that 62% of these adults are providing financial support for their adult children living at home, and half have cut back financially in order to manage the higher living costs.⁵¹ The more positive side of this sharing phenomenon is that most 'boomerang kids' express gratitude, and more than half expect to provide their parents with support later in life as a way to repay the help they are currently receiving. One in

⁴⁶ A Taylor, 'I'll take single over suffering any day', The Independent magazine, 1 November 2014.

⁴⁷ www.spareroom.com.

⁴⁸ www.kangaroom.com.

⁴⁹ N Slawson, 'Tenants in London forced to share rooms by sky-high rents', The Guardian, 25 January 2015.

⁵⁰ Office for National Statistics, 2011 Census: Population and Household Estimates for England and Wales, March 2011,

www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/2011census/populationandhouseholdestimatesforenglandandwales/2012-07-16#how-densely-england-and-wales-were-populated.

⁵¹ Centre for the Modern Family (2014) Meet the Full Nesters, reference.scottishwidows.co.uk/docs/cmfm_report_oct_2014.pdf, 17.

five even expect their parents to move in with them later in life. The report concludes that:

...many people in our focus groups also speak warmly about how they enjoy living with their grown-up kids. On the other hand, a small but significant number of full nesters do feel unhappy about how much support they must offer their children.⁵²

There is clearly a range between intentional and enforced sharing of the home by full-nest households.

In the private rented sector, SpareRoom and Kangaroom (already referred to), are just two of many digital platforms ostensibly devoted to making the process of finding shared rented homes easier but whose real aim is profit. These sites offer flat-shares to 'young professionals', who are internet-savvy and not dependent on Housing Benefit, looking for an enjoyable home-sharing experience akin to the iconic TV series *Friends*. Room-seekers upload details of their requirements, personality and lifestyle, and can search the online profiles of those offering a spare room for shared interests or even friends in common. This performativity is designed to mitigate the risk inherent in sharing a kitchen and bathroom with people who were previously strangers, even if you can withdraw into your own bedroom. SpareRoom, 'the #1 Flatshare site in the UK', warns that:

'If there are any issues that cause problems, try to avoid leaving notes around the house. This is unlikely to resolve anything as, even with the best of intentions, your tone can be misinterpreted. Best to sit down over coffee and talk it through'.⁵³

Successful flat-sharing, it seems, depends on the residents being rational, articulate and communicative with each other, willing to share their expectations and irritations as well as their home. And it is not just the tenants who are sharing; Weroom, for example, describes itself as 'a friendly community of share-seekers, room-renters, landlords and letting agencies gathered around a simple, intuitive and homely platform sharing a common vision'.⁵⁴ These varied interests are not usually aligned, but the language of this pseudo-sharing digital platform defines 'community' broadly, using the warm and friendly connotations of sharing for commercial profit.

In a different part of the private rented sector, single rooms in a building with shared facilities are offered to less affluent, perhaps unemployed, tenants. An interview carried out with a young man living in this type of accommodation produced some interesting

⁵² Ibid 21.

⁵³ www.spareroom.co.uk.

⁵⁴ www.weroom.com.

reflections on the meaning of home when you share the kitchen and bathroom with strangers:

'Everyone's bedroom is theirs and then the rest is all shared. Obviously as time goes on you become more accustomed to sharing ... I don't feel it's 'mine' but I feel comfortable in the bathroom or the kitchen

[Q: *Does it feel like home?*]

No but ... it'll never feel like you've got full responsibility and full control over things ... you're aware that it's not yours and it's someone else's and anyone could come in (to the kitchen) at any time.

This respondent had a short tenancy agreement, at his own request. He was prepared to put up with sharing, which could be described in his case as intentional but temporary. A more enforced form of sharing, due to financial necessity, was experienced by families with young children who also occupied one room in the same building, sharing other essential living rooms with strangers.

The relationship between lodger and landlord or landlady is more precarious, because one is living in the other's home and as a licensee has fewer rights than a tenant. A lodger described in interview how she carefully negotiated her use of the shared kitchen, bathroom and living room around the needs of the owner: she said the key to a successful lodging relationship is 'finding out what matters to people'. In her case the arrangement was very informal: 'nobody's signed anything, I just pay a standing order each month', and while she was very conscious of the inequality of power in this sharing arrangement, she concluded that this meant 'I don't feel responsible and that's a real plus, actually'.

The landlady of a different house explained how she vetted and chose her lodgers:

I show them round and explain how I use the space and explain what sort of resources they'll have and then we both sit down with a cup of tea and ask each other any questions that might crop up, but meanwhile we're obviously sizing each other up a little bit as people as well.

This process is the embodied version of examining and matching the online profiles offered by the flat-sharing websites. A more formal process, administered by a third party, operates in the Homeshare scheme⁵⁵ to match a younger person looking for accommodation with an elderly person living alone. The licensee occupies a spare room in exchange for companionship and some domestic help, plus a contribution to household bills. Whether this is intentional or enforced sharing, for either or both parties, is dependent on their individual circumstances. A sordid and precarious

⁵⁵ <https://homeshareuk.org/>.

version of home-sharing is offered by some advertisers of accommodation on the Craigslist website: for example, 'rent free accommodation for a girl ... I would expect a relationship in lieu of rent'.⁵⁶ Desperation would lead to acceptance of this form of enforced sharing.

Couch, or sofa, surfing is a form of temporary licence, insecure because it is intended to be extremely transient. Three distinct forms are identified here, which have very different implications. First, international couchsurfing, through which travellers wanting free lodgings in a foreign country, maybe for only one night, are connected online with local people offering to share their home on a very temporary basis. The Couchsurfing organisation⁵⁷ has nine million members globally, aged twenty-eight on average, and it is 'a remarkably safe, legit form of alternative accommodation'.⁵⁸ Its digital platform 'was created as a non-profit organization promoting the art of sharing'⁵⁹ but in 2010 it was bought by a for-profit corporation, sparking protests amongst members and 'a somewhat lessened sense of community'.⁶⁰ The Couchsurfing platform, like SpareRoom, works through providing online profiles; the traveller and the local who find a good 'match' can then make arrangements. Neither guest nor host envisage a legal relationship; the arrangement is by nature precarious but can be categorised as intentional sharing.

A second variant is sofa surfing by young graduates who 'shuttle between friends' houses, unable to take on a tenancy due to a 'combination of brutally high rents and a dearth of jobs', while others in the same situation 'pay 'mates' rates' for rooms in better-off pals' homes'.⁶¹ The difficulties experienced by these sofa surfers in maintaining their jobs and also the strain of maintaining relationships with the friends whose goodwill they rely on, are easily imagined. A graduate working as a marketing executive for a start-up company said, 'I started splitting my time between my friend's house and my boyfriend's flatshare in Brixton. We'd talked a little previously about moving in together, but my situation definitely speeded up that process, which does make it a

⁵⁶ www.mirror.co.uk/news/weird-news/16-creepy-ads-people-craigslist-8636382.

⁵⁷ www.couchsurfing.org

⁵⁸ H Line, 'Couchsurfing: would you sleep with a stranger?', *The Telegraph Travel*, 21 August 2014.

⁵⁹ J Fan, 'Is it safe?? How to Avoid Horror Stories from Couchsurfing', Jack Fan's blog, 25 June 2014, www.smartbudgettravel.com/is-couchsurfing-safe/.

⁶⁰ R Belk, 'Sharing Versus Pseudo-Sharing in Web 2.0' (2014) 18 *Anthropologist* 7, 9.

⁶¹ H Thomas, H. (2013) 'Young, middle-class - and homeless: Meet the sofa-surfer generation', *Mail online*, 10 February 2013: www.dailymail.co.uk/home/you/article-2273809/Young-middle-class--homeless-Meet-sofa-surfer-generation.html#ixzz3cna2Auh5.

little less romantic'.⁶² Both home and relationship are made more precarious by these pressures leading to enforced sharing, and there are many in the same situation.

Nonetheless, these mainly middle-class sofa surfers are usually already on an upward trajectory towards a better future. They have far more resources at their disposal than the homeless people whose sofa surfing makes them invisible to policymakers and ignored in official homelessness statistics.⁶³ This third variant of sofa surfing is often just a step in the downward spiral to street homelessness,⁶⁴ and provides an extremely precarious home. One in five survey respondents had resorted to this kind of accommodation in the past year; the major reason was family breakdown, in 11% of cases involving domestic violence.⁶⁵ Homeless sofa surfers are likely to be imposing on friends and family members who themselves have limited space and few resources, and their presence as licensee may well jeopardise their host's tenancy agreement. Research suggests that in some cases, the relationship between the sofa surfer and their host may be 'abusive and exploitative', making the homeless person's situation even more precarious and potentially traumatic.⁶⁶ Particular groups: women, young people and minority ethnic and new immigrant households, seem more likely than others to adopt sofa surfing as a temporary solution to homelessness. It is unclear whether these groups are ignorant of alternative options such as shelters and hostels, or unwilling to use them.⁶⁷

Housing associations have traditionally provided housing to groups at risk of homelessness, including supported housing in shared homes for disadvantaged groups. However, the recent policy turn to asset-based, market rent policies has had implications for these efforts to counter precarity. For example, the One Housing Group owns two large and now extremely valuable properties in Islington and in Kingston upon Thames. In the 1970s these were set up as shared housing projects for resident groups comprising both vulnerable people and others willing to provide support. In what have been described as 'London's last communes',⁶⁸ all residents shared the communal space and paid the same amount for bills and food; when vacancies arose

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ D Robinson, 'Hidden homelessness' in S Smith (ed) *International Encyclopaedia of Housing and Home* (Oxford, Elsevier, 2012).

⁶⁴ S Fitzpatrick, G Bramley and S Johnsen, 'Pathways into Multiple Exclusion Homelessness in Seven UK Cities' (2013) 50 *Urban Studies* 148.

⁶⁵ Centrepoint (2014) *Hidden homelessness revealed - new poll shows shocking numbers of sofa surfers*, centrepoint.org.uk/news-events/news/2014/december/hidden-homelessness-revealed-new-poll-shows-shocking-numbers-of-sofa-surfers.

⁶⁶ Robinson, 'Hidden homelessness', 370.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 369.

⁶⁸ J Doward, 'We are a dying breed': two of London's last communes unite in fight against closure', *The Observer*, 7 June 2015.

rooms were offered to key workers and those on low incomes. The projects have been successful for decades. However, the housing association's assistant director of communications was recently quoted as saying 'these people are paying tuppence. We have a responsibility to look at this. We might fix up [the property in Islington] and refurbish it, make it into self-contained studio flats for people who have a right to be there [or] we might elect to sell it' (Doward, 2015). One resident faced with possible eviction said, 'I suppose I'd survive somehow. But for me, my life would be a quarter of what it was'. The new financial climate places responsibilities on housing associations, which makes residents' homes precarious because they apparently no longer have any 'right to be there'.⁶⁹

The new regulatory and contractualised approach to providing services for disabled people has also affected Camphill Village Trust's long-established shared communities where 'people with learning disabilities, mental health problems and other special needs ... live, learn and work with others of all abilities in an atmosphere of mutual care and respect'.⁷⁰ In legal terms, Camphill's unsalaried volunteers (the residents without disabilities known as 'co-workers') were licencees. A recent inspection by the Care Quality Commission has brought about changes.⁷¹ The co-workers are now treated as employees of the Trust and no longer offered licences to occupy shared accommodation, ending the Camphill model of a family household. The CEO of the Camphill Village Trust described this as 'a period of transition for CVT. We are working to align our values and achievements with the requirements of 21st century social care. Like other social care providers we exist in a time of economic austerity and regulatory scrutiny'.⁷² This context produces values which emphasise the precarity of certain disadvantaged groups in society.

Sharing space and facilities within and around the home

This particular form of sharing of property rights and space goes beyond household or family sharing, to a legally defined community within which space and facilities are shared. This section of the chapter will examine instances of this type of sharing provided by long leasehold tenure and housing co-operatives. My research suggests there are two distinct sharing models here: uninformed sharing of space and facilities with others, and genuinely intentional sharing in a community of choice, which largely determine the extent to which homes are precarious.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ See camphill.org.uk.

⁷¹ B Rhodes and R Davies, Regulation: The unintentional destruction of intentional communities. (Sheffield, The Centre for Welfare Reform, 2014: www.centreforwelfarereform.org/uploads/attachment/415/regulation.pdf).

⁷² Ibid, 21.

Long leasehold is the most common, although not the only possible, legal framework for private housing developments in which space and facilities are held in common by the owners.⁷³ In leasehold sites, including for example blocks of flats or gated communities but also some houses on ordinary streets, a legal entity (which may be owned and controlled by the developer or successor in title, or transferred to the residents collectively) is the owner of the land. Residents have property rights to their home but also shared rights to the common property, which at some sites comprises only the roof and external and internal access ways, but at others includes extensive grounds and facilities. This is sharing in the sense of a one-off allocation of property rights, and an example of uninformed sharing. Long leaseholds are 'pseudo-sharing' in Belk's terms.⁷⁴ Purchasers of long leaseholds consider themselves to be owner-occupiers and are often shocked to find that in law they are tenants.⁷⁵ Leaseholders' homes are made precarious by exploitative practices around service charges and ground rent.⁷⁶ If the owner defaults on either of these contractual payments, the lease (and therefore the home) could be subject to forfeiture.⁷⁷

The developer of a multi-owned housing site may choose to set up a residents' management company and transfer the freehold to it; or residents may collectively purchase the freehold under the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Development Act 1993. Either route leads to leaseholders sharing the responsibility for and governance of the whole site.⁷⁸ Many people purchasing homes in multi-owned leasehold sites are not aware in advance of the combination of property rights, contractual obligations and self-governance that they are buying into when they sign legal documents which are complex, lengthy and non-negotiable. Unfortunately, this is a common experience across many jurisdictions.⁷⁹ Uninformed sharing then results from a lack of interest by leaseholders and a dearth of available information. The chair of a residents' association hoping to set up a company to purchase the freehold complained that 'there are always a number of people who just don't take any notice, aren't interested, you can't contact

⁷³ See Blandy, 'Legal Frameworks for Multi-owned Housing'.

⁷⁴ Belk, 'Sharing Versus Pseudo-Sharing', 11-12.

⁷⁵ I Cole and D Robinson, 'Owners yet Tenants: The Position of Leaseholders in Flats in England and Wales' (2000) 15 *Housing Studies*, 595.

⁷⁶ The Homeowners Alliance asserts, based on their research, that 'freeholders use their positions of power to extort money from leaseholders in a number of ways': Homeowners Alliance, *Homes Held Hostage – the rise and abuse of leasehold* (London, Homeowners Alliance, 2017: <http://hoa.org.uk/catalogues/report-on-uk-leaseholder-system/index.html>).

⁷⁷ Forfeiture can be exercised by 'peaceable re-entry', although it is advisable to obtain a court order: *Billson v Residential Apartments* [1992] 1 All ER 141.

⁷⁸ S Blandy, 'Legal Frameworks for Multi-owned Housing in England and Wales: Owners' Experiences', in S Blandy, A Dupuis and J Dixon (eds), *Multi-owned Housing: Law, Power and Practice* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2010).

⁷⁹ S Blandy, A Dupuis and J Dixon (eds), *Multi-owned Housing: Law, Power and Practice* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2010).

them'. A leaseholder in a site where the freehold was about to be transferred confessed that, 'I suppose to be honest, I'm not even that clear whether or not I have taken on any responsibility'.

Once a formally constituted residents' management company has acquired the freehold, tensions can develop between the owners. One described how 'the board members took a very hard line', sending formal letters to neighbours rather than attempting to resolve issues face to face. This officious approach had caused other board members to resign and had led to 'the destruction of any community spirit'. Such a divisive atmosphere causes homes to feel precarious, rather than residents sharing responsibilities for managing the site and being able to enjoy the common spaces together. By contrast, co-housing in leasehold sites potentially exemplifies intentional sharing, both in the sense of possession and use of a resource in common, and through participation and contribution to a common ideal. Co-housing is not a legal term but a set of principles governing 'intentional communities... created and run by their residents. Each household has a self-contained, personal and private home but residents come together to manage their community, share activities, eat together'.⁸⁰ The concept of co-housing therefore centres around sharing: residents share a common house, some meals, and facilities such as a laundry room and grounds. They also share the task of collective governance through intensive meetings and discussions. In many co-housing developments residents also cook, garden and carry out maintenance together, performing the values of 'equality, interdependence and reciprocity'⁸¹ which are fundamental to intentional sharing.

Running a self-managed neighbourhood is a considerable time commitment, 'but it's countered by a sense of security. We are our own landlords'.⁸² The style and effectiveness of communal decision-making and management determine how the communal spaces are shared and used, illustrated here by a co-housing leaseholder: 'There is a sort of collective responsibility ... people go and clear it up after the kids have dropped litter... there is a perception that we own the common spaces together'. Over time, residents' social practices develop, some become written rules, subcommittees are formed and dispute resolution procedures are worked out and put into practice: 'I think as we live together longer and these things develop, you know what the rules are, what the unwritten rules are, what the conventions are'. Most co-housing communities also have procedures for vetting and induction of potential new residents, sending out detailed information packs about how the community works and the commitment that is expected, and inviting potential residents to share a communal

⁸⁰ <https://cohousing.org.uk/>.

⁸¹ Butler, *Performative Theory of Assembly*, 218.

⁸² H Sherwood, 'How to create happy communities through co-housing', *Guardian Cities*, 21 November 2014.

meal. Such arrangements reduce the risk of tensions developing within the community, and guard against any lack of commitment to resolving difficulties together, thus making homes less precarious.

Around twenty co-housing projects have now been completed in the UK, and there are many more co-housing groups currently in development. Co-housing seems to be increasingly in the news.⁸³ Perhaps unsurprisingly therefore, the co-housing model is currently being adapted for profit by WeWork, which already provides shared office space on a membership basis (like the Uber taxi platform) and is now the eighth most valuable private company in the world.⁸⁴ It has identified 'millennials flocking to cities like New York and San Francisco at a time when rents ... are hitting unprecedented highs'⁸⁵, as a lucrative market from which it intends to make over \$636m profit by 2018.⁸⁶ WeWork references kibbutzim and close-knit neighbourhoods as successful models. How does it compare with co-housing? A conventional 'strengths and weaknesses analysis' of co-housing found that the benefits of affordability, safety, sustainability, and sociability, far outweigh the disadvantages, but raised concerns about ownership: 'Who owns the land and the houses? Who are the investors? What happens when community members die or decide to move away?'⁸⁷ WeWork plans to circumvent those issues by retaining control and ownership in its WeLive model, offering membership to residents rather than any property interest, making them more precarious.

While the 'real' co-housing movement challenges the assumptions of control, autonomy and exclusion associated with the tenure of home ownership, it has also been criticised for providing homes only for relatively affluent households. However, the newer co-housing sites are mainly urban, and are attracting interest and involvement from UK local authorities who see potential for a new form of affordable housing.⁸⁸ In order to challenge precarity and enable people on low incomes to become co-housing residents, LILAC ('low-impact living affordable community') uses an innovative variant of long leasehold.⁸⁹ The freehold of LILAC's land is owned by a Community Land Trust, a not-for-profit society that cannot sell its assets but must use them for the benefit of a defined

⁸³ See, for example, R Sharp, 'Affordable 13-bedroom home. Good Transport links. Would suit six families...' The Independent Magazine, 26 April 2014; and Sherwood, 'How to create happy communities'.

⁸⁴ C Cadwalladr, 'Changing what we call home', The Observer, 10 January 2016.

⁸⁵ M Cohen, 'WeWorks Communal Living Concept on Wall Street gets its First Residents', 13 January 2016: www.6sqft.com/residents-move-into-weworks-communal-living-concept-on-wall-street/.

⁸⁶ Cadwalladr, 'Changing what we call home', 21.

⁸⁷ Towergate Insurance, Community 2.0: is co-housing the future of urban design? (Maidstone, Towergate Insurance, undated: www.towergateinsurance.co.uk/commercial-property-insurance/is-cohousing-the-future).

⁸⁸ Sherwood, 'How to create happy communities'.

⁸⁹ P Chatterton, *Low Impact Living: A Field Guide to Ecological, Affordable Community Building* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2015).

geographical community.⁹⁰ The homes built on the land are owned by the LILAC Mutual Home Ownership Society, which is registered as a co-operative controlled by its members. The members are the residents; each has a twenty year renewable lease which 'gives the right to occupy a specified house or flat, and the right to democratically control the housing community in which they live'.⁹¹

Unlike the long leases offered at LILAC, most fully mutual co-operatives own the land residents have either a tenancy or a licence to occupy. A one of my research sites, a radical housing co-operative committed to assisting destitute asylum seekers, residents described coming home to find that 'their' room was temporarily occupied by someone in greater need. This might be considered an extreme example of precarious housing, but the residents had discussed and chosen to use the co-operative's property to alleviate the precarity of others, in the full knowledge that it would diminish their individual rights. However, as with housing associations and trusts, even fully mutual housing co-operatives are not immune from changing economic conditions. In a 1988 parliamentary debate it was said that 'the nature of a co-operative [is that] the interests of landlord and tenants as a whole are in effect indivisible'.⁹² Lord Hope quoted from this report in the case of *Berrisford v Mexfield Housing Co-operative Ltd*, but went on to say that 'at least so far as Mexfield is concerned, that happy state of affairs no longer exists ... financial pressures may cause the parties' interests to diverge to the detriment of the residential occupier',⁹³ making their home more precarious.

Shared property boundaries

In this type of sharing relationships affecting the home, the one-off allocation of property rights determines which homes adjoin each other. Boundaries are always shared, forming a connection between the resident of one home and the neighbours. In that sense, property boundaries represent enforced sharing and exemplify the precariousness this may generate. The fact that boundaries are permeable to nuisances such as noise and smell undermines the home as a place of security, privacy and refuge, as many tales of 'neighbours from hell' attest. For owner-occupiers, the surrounding neighbourhood is a potential risk to the home as it affects property values.⁹⁴ Obliging, the British residential property website Zoopla assembles neighbourhood profiles: tenure breakdown, employment statistics, family types, residents' interests,

⁹⁰ Housing and Regeneration Act 2008.

⁹¹ CDS Co-operatives, *A consumer's guide to Mutual Home Ownership: A new way of owning a stake in your own home* (London, CDS, undated).

⁹² Hansard (HL Debates), 3 November 1988, vol 501, col 395.

⁹³ [2011] UKSC 52, at [81].

⁹⁴ L A Fennell, *The Unbounded Home: Property Values Beyond Property Lines* (New Haven CT, Yale University Press, 2009).

and even what newspapers residents read,⁹⁵ for 'sharing' with prospective purchasers in their efforts to find a less precarious home.

Owners of neighbouring properties may disagree over the exact line of the boundary between them. In one disputed case that involved a small area of cobbled yard, the Court of Appeal recorded:

There are too many calamitous neighbour disputes in the courts ... the case that cried out for compromise moves onwards and upwards to a conclusion that is disastrous for one of the parties, possibly for both. The extreme acrimony between these neighbours is nothing new.⁹⁶

A wealthy homeowner can purchase extensive land and position their home at a distance from neighbouring properties, reducing the risk of direct disruption. However, longer boundaries are more difficult to protect, so ownership is performed through erecting deterrent boundaries around the home, symbolising control of space and property rights. Although burglary rates have continued to drop over the last fifty years, successive British Crime Surveys have consistently indicated that fear of crime outstrips actual crime statistics. Anxiety itself makes the home feel insecure; huge amounts are spent on fortifying homes in an attempt to stave off this source of precariousness.⁹⁷

Performativity, participation, protests and precarity

Discussion in this penultimate section of the chapter moves on to focus more closely on the third sense of sharing: collective participation and contribution. In her recent work, Butler has extended the idea of performativity to collective protests and demonstrations, asserting that these new politics of performativity embody the values of equality, interdependence and reciprocity.⁹⁸ Her statement that 'the opposite of precarity is not security, but, rather, the struggle for an egalitarian social and political order in which a livable interdependency becomes possible' is particularly relevant for this chapter.⁹⁹ A 'liveable interdependency' is modelled when people act together to organise and then participate in street demonstrations or occupations to protest against precarity.

⁹⁵ www.zoopla.co.uk/.

⁹⁶ *Bradford v James* [2008] EWCA Civ 837, Mummery LJ at [1] & [2].

⁹⁷ R Atkinson and S Blandy, *Domestic Fortress* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2016).

⁹⁸ Butler, *Performative Theory of Assembly*, 218.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 69.

Various housing campaigns span the social rented and the private rented sector, including: the Living Rent campaign;¹⁰⁰ Defend Council Housing;¹⁰¹ Axe the Housing Act¹⁰² (the Housing and Planning Act 2016, summarised above). Digital platforms enable such alliances to be formed, protests maintained and publicised; often social media is used to organise rapid action which effectively draws attention to housing injustices. These campaigning groups often combine forces, for example in protesting and making demands on local and national government following the fire at Grenfell Tower.¹⁰³

The lobby group, Generation Rent, 'campaigns for professionally managed, secure, decent and affordable private rented homes in sustainable communities',¹⁰⁴ an aim which if achieved would remove much of the precarity from this sector. One such campaign concerned the New Era estate in London where nearly one hundred tenant households were threatened with eviction by Westbrook Partners, the US investment company that owned the freehold and wanted a threefold increase in the rents. At the end of 2014, Westbrook Partners gave in to the protesters and sold the estate to Dolphin Living, a charitable foundation. Dolphin Living now plans to adopt rents fixed on a 'pay according to income' basis, rather similar to LILAC's rent structure. Dolphin's chief executive explained that 'there will be families with three children paying less for a big flat than a couple in a small flat'.¹⁰⁵ While this approach of prioritising the community interest over individual tenants is to be welcomed, Dolphin is imposing this sharing of the cost rather than the residents adopting it through informed choice. The homes of some New Era tenants seem about to become more precarious.

Focus E15 is another example of sharing as participation in anti-precarity protests, in this case focused on the effects of local authority regeneration policies for tenants in the social rented sector, and in particular Newham council which has earmarked the Carpenters Estate in London E15 for privatization. The group has made common cause with other protesters. In April 2015 one of the group's leaders, Jasmin Stone, was arrested for re-occupying a council flat (not on the Carpenters Estate) from which the tenant had been evicted for rent arrears due to a reduction in her welfare benefits. The re-occupation was categorized as squatting, now a crime as previously discussed, but which may also constitute a shared protest against precarity. Stone's involvement in the protests has actually made her own position less precarious. She has been offered a

¹⁰⁰ <http://livingrent.org.uk/>

¹⁰¹ <http://www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk/dch/>

¹⁰² <http://www.axethehousingact.org.uk/about/>

¹⁰³ D Boyle, 'Grenfell Tower tensions could boil over as thousands set to attend 'justice' rally', The Daily Telegraph 16 June 2017.

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.generationrent.org/>.

¹⁰⁵ R Booth, 'New Era estate could means-test residents to set individual rents', The Guardian, 25 February 2015.

five-year permanent tenancy by Newham council, who 'are bending over backwards to help me, and I know it's because of all the fuss caused by Focus E15'.¹⁰⁶

Campaigners for the homeless set up protest camps in Manchester¹⁰⁷ and in Liverpool.¹⁰⁸ In Manchester, the campaign drew attention to the increase in rough sleepers, which meant that even the precarious accommodation offered by night shelters is overwhelmed by the numbers in need. One activist shared his experience of organizing anti-fracking protest camps. The Liverpool protest was timed to coincide with the celebration of the shipping line Cunard's 175th anniversary. The empty shop doorways that are usually home to rough sleepers had been boarded over to make the problem invisible, but the camp placed 'the issue of homelessness firmly in the public eye'.¹⁰⁹ Sharing campaigns, skills and expertise can strengthen and help publicise protests about the ways in which policies and practices create precarity for particular groups of occupiers, or in particular types of home.

Some forms of sharing housing are also performative enactments of this 'struggle for an egalitarian social and political order in which a livable interdependency becomes possible'.¹¹⁰ A long-term housing co-operative resident explained that she was committed to this collective legal form because 'individual ownership of property leads inevitably to ... selfishness, self-interest and the gap between rich and poor'. LILAC's ethos and practice are based on a refusal to 'see housing as a commodity on which you speculate'.¹¹¹ Homes of this type epitomise intentional sharing, as well as the residents' commitment to participate in a way of life that models the possibility of a different approach to housing.

Conclusions

Sharing has been used in this chapter as a lens for interrogating the idea of the precarious home. The continuum of sharing identified and applied here has shed light on the home's precariousness, and the precarity of different groups in relation to the home.

Clearly, the legal structures through which the tenure of the home is materialised are extremely important, for example the legislation that has created increasingly insecure forms of occupation in the social rented sector. Butler's distinction between precariousness and precarity has proved useful in identifying specific groups, for

¹⁰⁶ R Booth, 'Focus E15 housing activist arrested on suspicion of squatting', *The Guardian* 14 April 2015.

¹⁰⁷ C Leeming, 'Manchester's homeless camp remains defiant', *Big Issue North*, 11-17 May 2015.

¹⁰⁸ K Brown, 'Activists camp by Liverpool Pier Head', *Big Issue North*, 8-14 June 2015.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Butler, *Performative Theory of Assembly*, 69.

¹¹¹ Quoted in Sherwood, 'How to create happy communities'.

example the tenants of social housing providers governed by market-driven legislation and by regulatory regimes which embody funders' expectation that these landlords will adopt asset-based risk management. However, the degree of insecurity inherent in any particular tenure sector can be overridden by other risks associated with sharing the home, which make it more or less precarious than its tenure alone would indicate. The horizontal relationships between residents of the same accommodation, between neighbours, or between those collectively involved in governing their community, has been shown to frequently matter more than the vertical relationship between landlord and tenant, or freeholder and leaseholder. In the case of shared property rights, for example in long leasehold multi-owned housing sites, a continuing commitment by residents to community self-government can significantly lessen precariousness. This echoes Belk's analysis of 'sharing in', which expands the domain of common property, as contrasted with 'sharing out' which preserves boundaries between the individual and others.¹¹² However, as has been noted, sharing the home with anyone other than family challenges the powerful ideology of property as sovereign control over domestic territory which is difficult to overcome.

Different meanings of sharing have been identified and examined in the current context of austerity policies. A trajectory towards intentional sharing (a deliberate and positive choice to share, on the basis of full information) is represented by the slowly growing co-housing movement, but the majority of sharing arrangements remain enforced (an unchosen response to external circumstances) and/or uninformed (sharing by choice, but without being aware of the implications).

Precariousness has been shown to be a subjective experience so, for example, a transient, insecure home may suit some residents at particular stages in their life or career cycle, while others would experience such instability as intolerably precarious. Notably, affluence can overcome insecurity associated with tenure, at the very highest end of the market. The ultra-wealthy often rent luxury homes (and therefore share property rights) in capital cities, exclusive resorts and tax havens, rejecting property ownership and its responsibilities.¹¹³ It may be that some occupiers, although wanting to retain the right to leave on their own terms, are not seeking a home at all.¹¹⁴

This chapter has demonstrated that sharing is to some degree always intentional, although always tempered by the degree of choice available, which affects whether a

¹¹² Belk, 'Sharing' 276.

¹¹³ J Rifkin, *The Age of Access: The New Culture of Hypercapitalism, Where All of Life is a Paid-for Experience* (New York, Tarcher, 2000); R Atkinson and S Blandy, 'A picture of the floating World: grounding the secessionary affluence of the residential cruise liner' (2009) 41 *Antipode* 92.

¹¹⁴ I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for this thought-provoking insight.

particular home might be experienced as enforced sharing by one or more of the parties, for example in an intimate relationship or a full-nest household. Intention is also expressed through the performative and common practice of pre-vetting, whether meeting in person before becoming or taking on a lodger, the induction processes of co-housing groups, or putting your profile on an online flat-sharing platform. Online sharing has been highlighted as an important contemporary trend, enabling both the marketization of sharing arrangements and the building of real and virtual communities to organise housing campaigns against precarity.