28|10
2026

Housing Is a Verb

DASH - Belgrade

Nikhil Calas
Architect and carpenter faire, Visiting Researcher at EPFL - ALICE lab
VP of Syndicat de l'architecture (SA), President of APGBA

Federico Diodato
Architect faire, PhD, Associate Professor at ENSA Nancy
Member of LHAC, ENSA Nancy, Director of Chaire Nouvelles Ruralités

faire

Vivendo Discimus, by living we learn
🏗️ Practice 📚 Research 🎓 Pedagogy 🪚 Advocacy

faire est une agence d'architecture implantée à Paris et dirigée par Federico Diodato & Nikhil Calas

faire explore la pratique de l'architecture sous ses multiples formes, en développant une démarche interdisciplinaire située au croisement de la construction, la recherche, l'enseignement et l'engagement politique. Cette démarche est entendue comme l'art de transformer notre environnement : un art profondément collaboratif et finalisé à façonner l'espace pour le faire durer, l'entretenir et en prendre soin au quotidien.



📸: Vincent Hoel

Mail
Instagram
Threads
Linkedin

📍 3, Square des Bouleaux, Paris



« When dwellers control the major decisions and are free to make their own contribution to the design, construction or management of their housing, both the process and the environment produced stimulate individual and social well-being. When people have no control over, nor responsibility for key decisions in the housing process, on the other hand, dwelling environments may instead become a barrier to personal fulfilment and a burden on the economy. »

John Turner, *Freedom to Build*, 1972, p. 241

01 I Roots of Participation

02 I Building Community

03 I Selfbuild and Agency

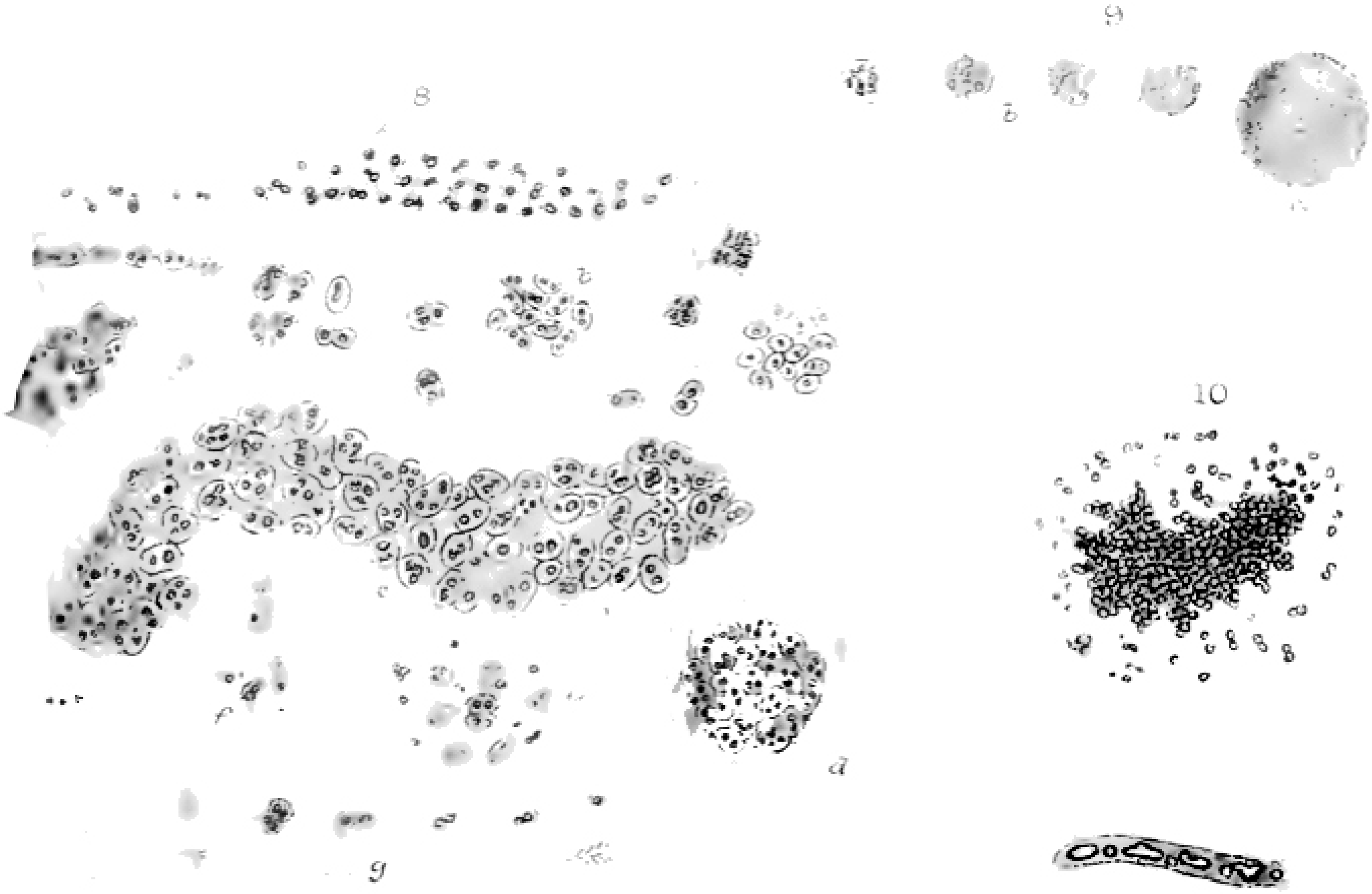
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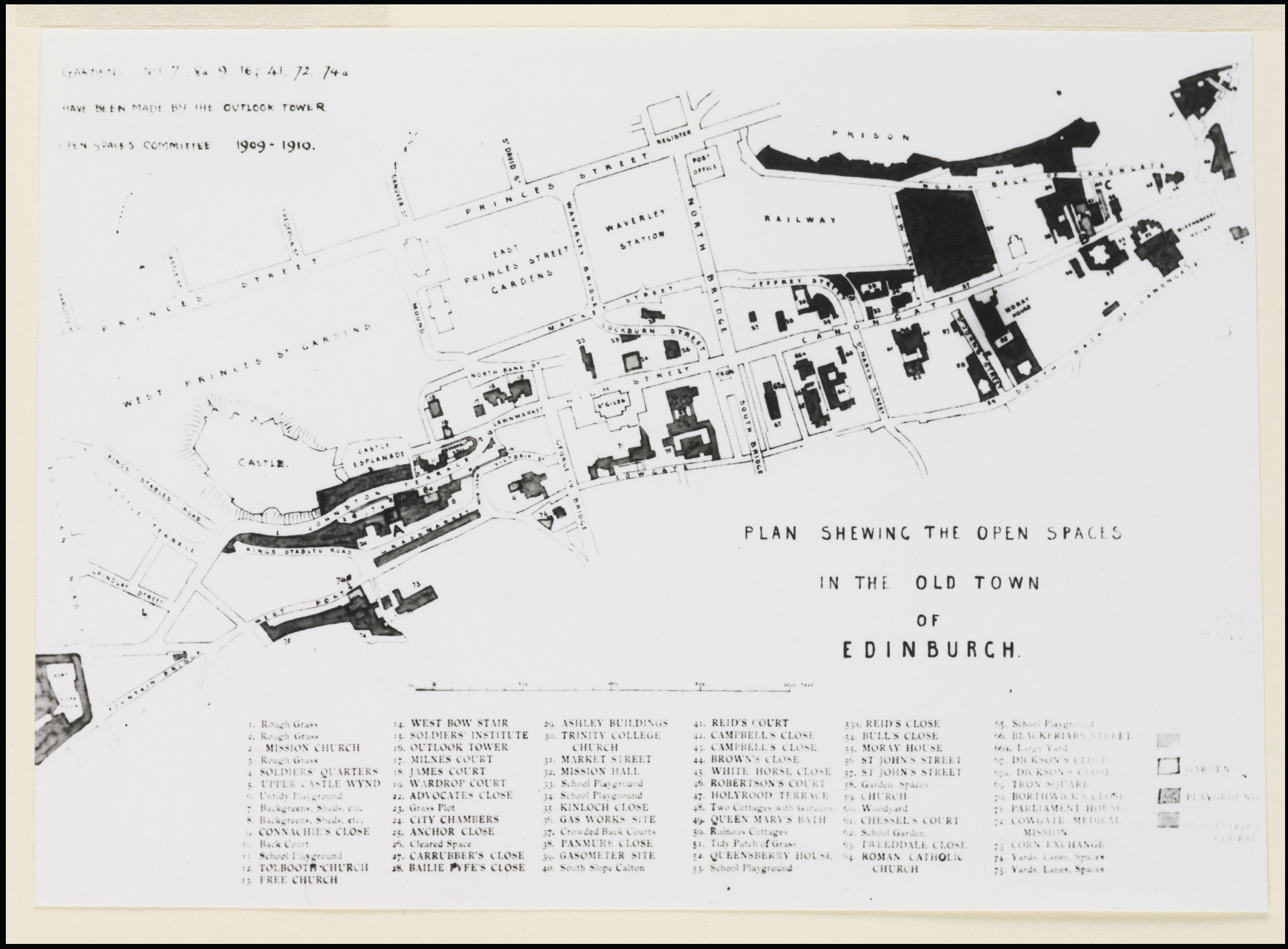
Patrick Geddes 1854-1932
Scottish biologist, sociologist, geographer, philanthropist and pioneering town planner



Examples of coevolution between organisms, in Patrick Geddes and J. Cossar Ewart, *On the life-history of Spirillum*, 1878, p.12



Patrick Geddes, *View North from Outlook Tower,* c. 1909,
Patrick Geddes Collection, University of Edinburgh Heritage Collections



Patrick Geddes and Franck Mears, *Survey of open spaces in the Old Town*, c. 1909, Patrick Geddes Collection, University of Edinburgh Heritage Collections



Norah Mears, *Regeneration of Edinburgh's historic centre*, University of Strathclyde, Patrick Geddes Papers, 1911



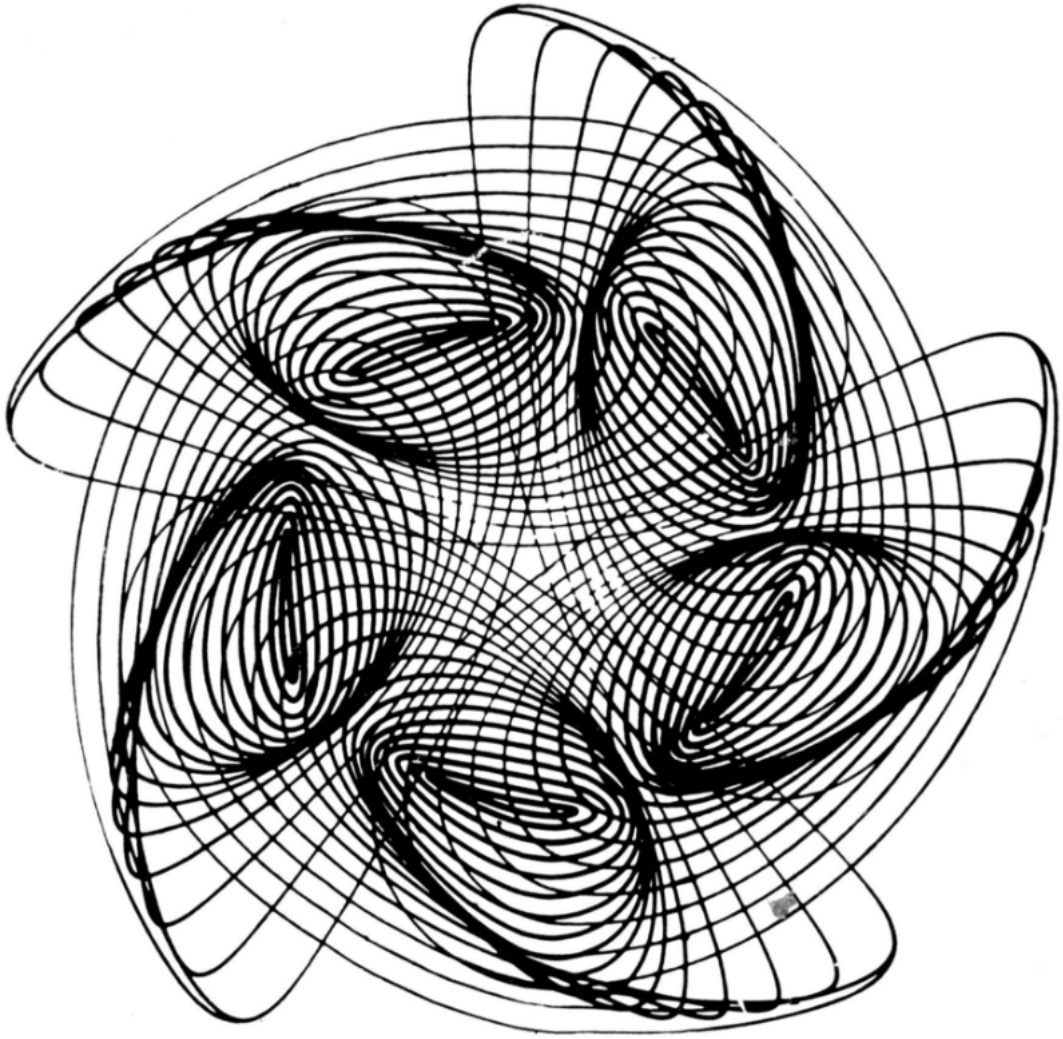
Norah Mears, *Regeneration of Edinburgh's historic centre*, University of Strathclyde, Patrick Geddes Papers, 1911

Patrick Geddes, *Regeneration of Edinburgh's historic centre*, University of Strathclyde, Patrick Geddes Papers, 1911





Summer Meeting, Ramsay Gardens, Edinburgh, University of Strathclyde, Patrick Geddes Papers, 1896



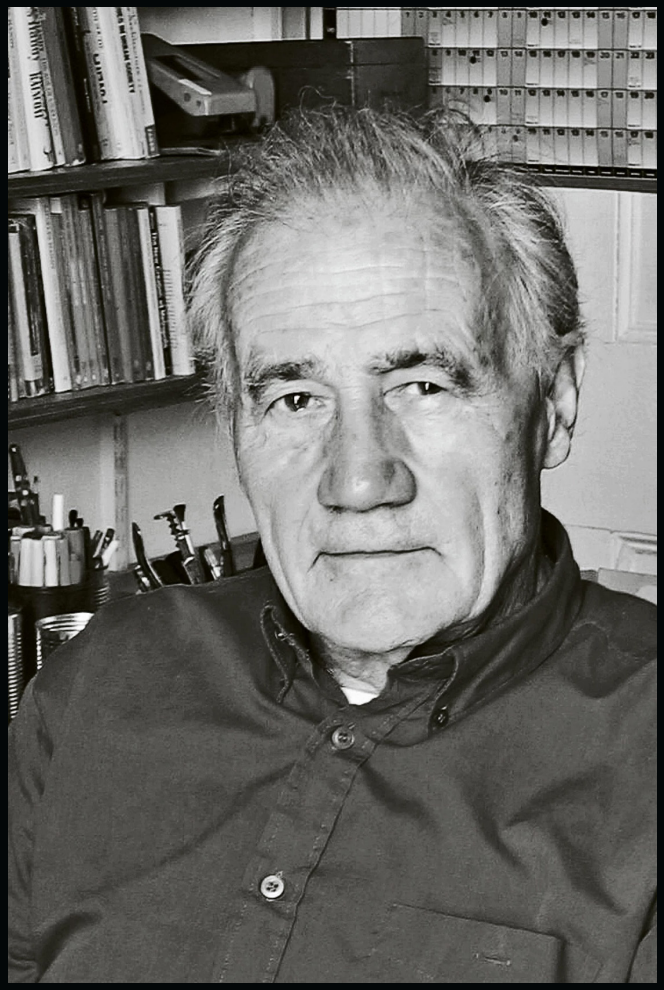
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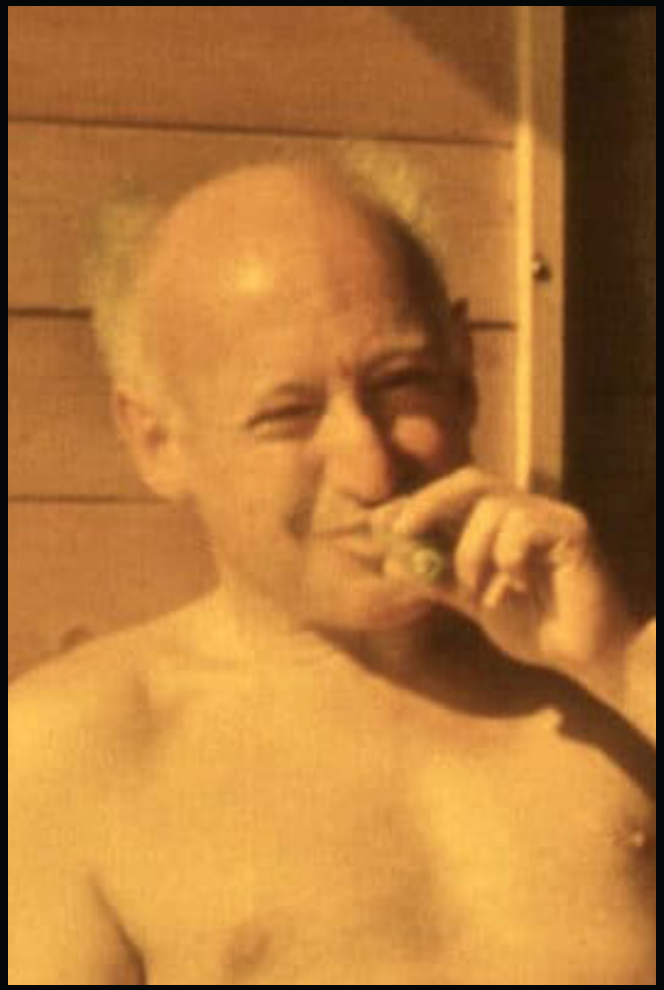
03 I Selfbuild and Agency



Colin Ward
1924-2010



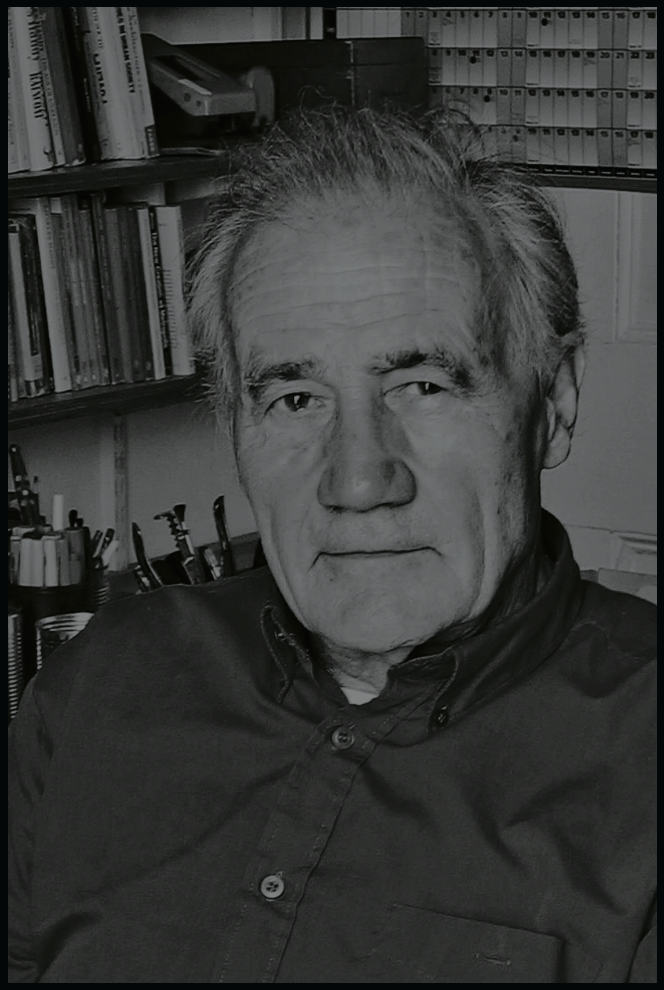
John F. C. Turner
1927-2023



Walter Segal
1907-1985



Colin Ward
1924-2010



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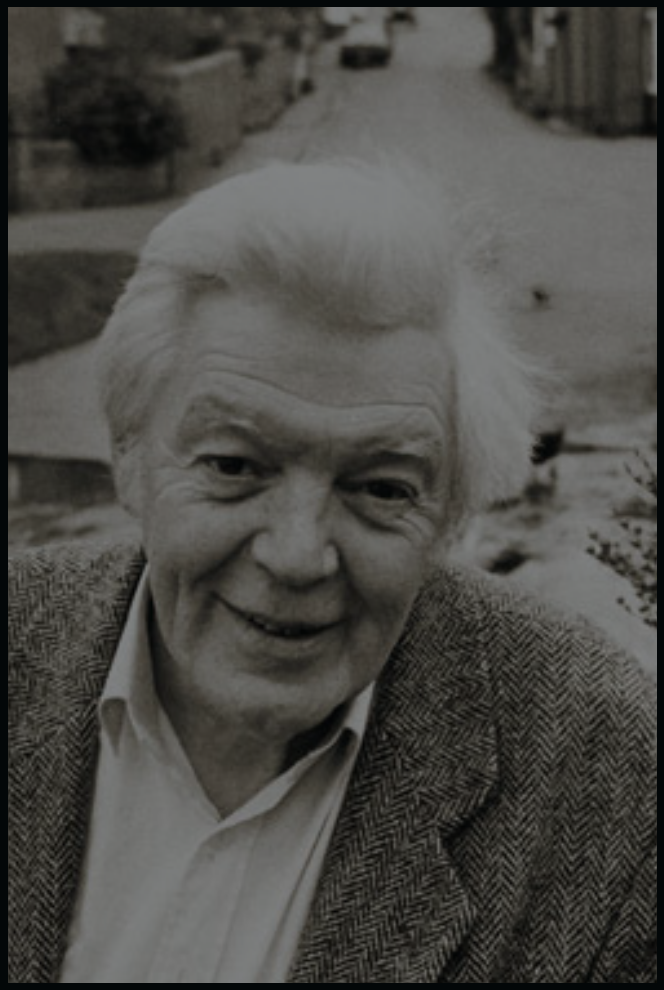
Walter Segal
1907-1985

« There must be many of us with the ambition, more or less, to build our own home—not to be able to get a builder to do it for us, but actually to do it ourselves. »

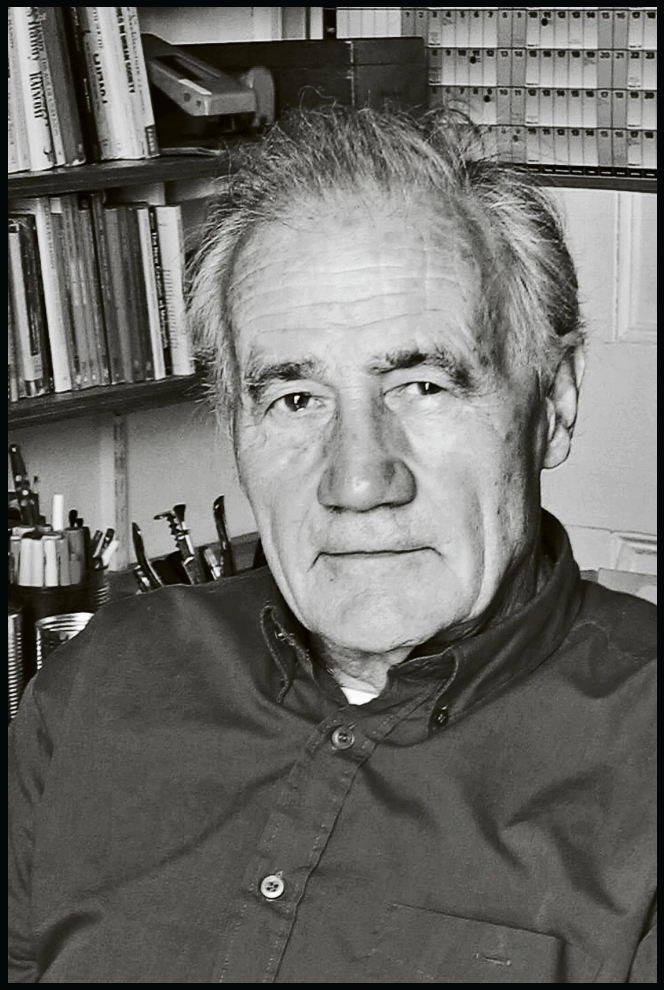
Colin Ward, *Building Your Own House*, Freedom, 17 september 1949



CIAM summer school in Venice, 1952



Colin Ward
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John F. C. Turner
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Walter Segal
1907-1985



Architectural Design, n° 8
August 1963

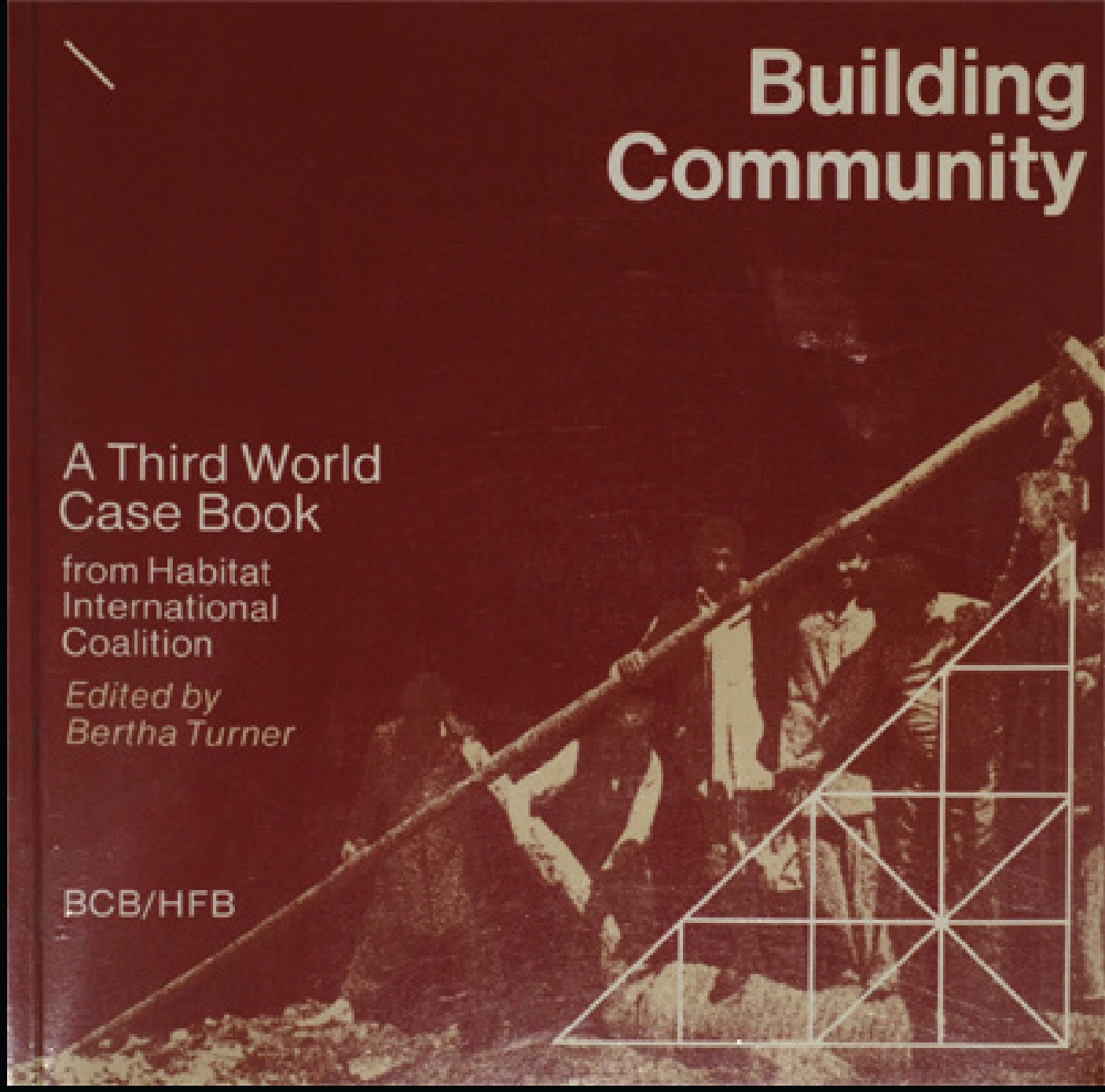
3 laws from John F. C. Turner, *Housing by People,* 1976

1. Dweller control. When dwellers control the major decisions, the result is well-being. When they don't, the result is a burden on the economy and a barrier to fulfilment

2. Use value. The value of housing lies in what it does for people's lives, not in standards imposed on it

3. Agency. People are generally better able to live with the shortcomings of a home they have shaped themselves than with those imposed on them by others

Bertha Turner,
Building Community: A Third World Casebook,
1988



« The vital aspects of housing are not quantifiable at all. The most important ‘product’ of any human activity is, of course, the satisfaction or frustration of needs. »

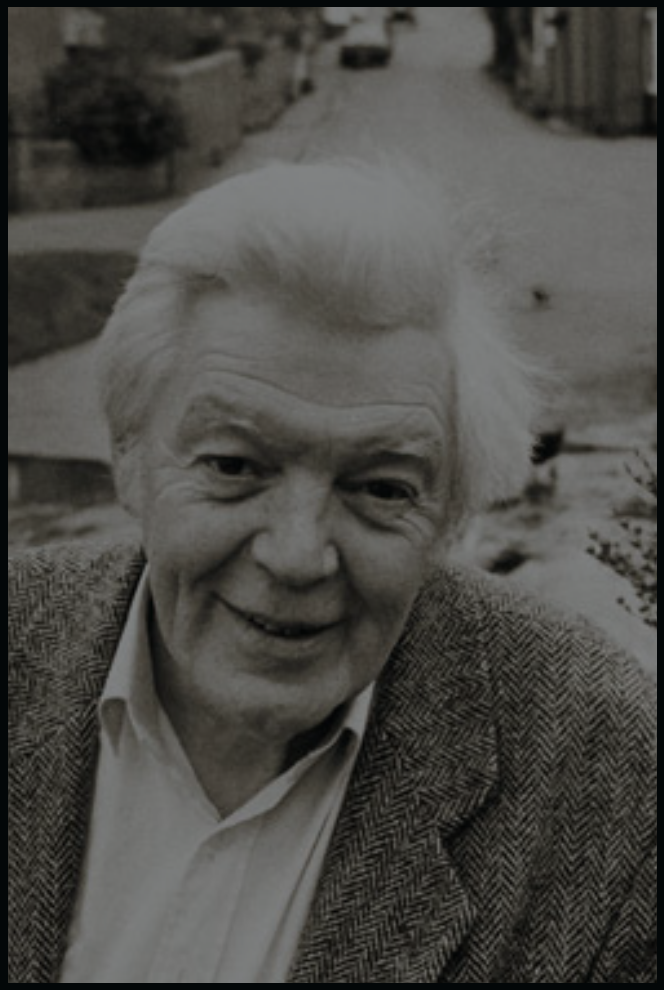
« The linguistic difference between housing as a noun and housing as a verb, and the political difference between legislating standard rules and executing standardized games. »

John Turner, *Freedom to Build*, 1972

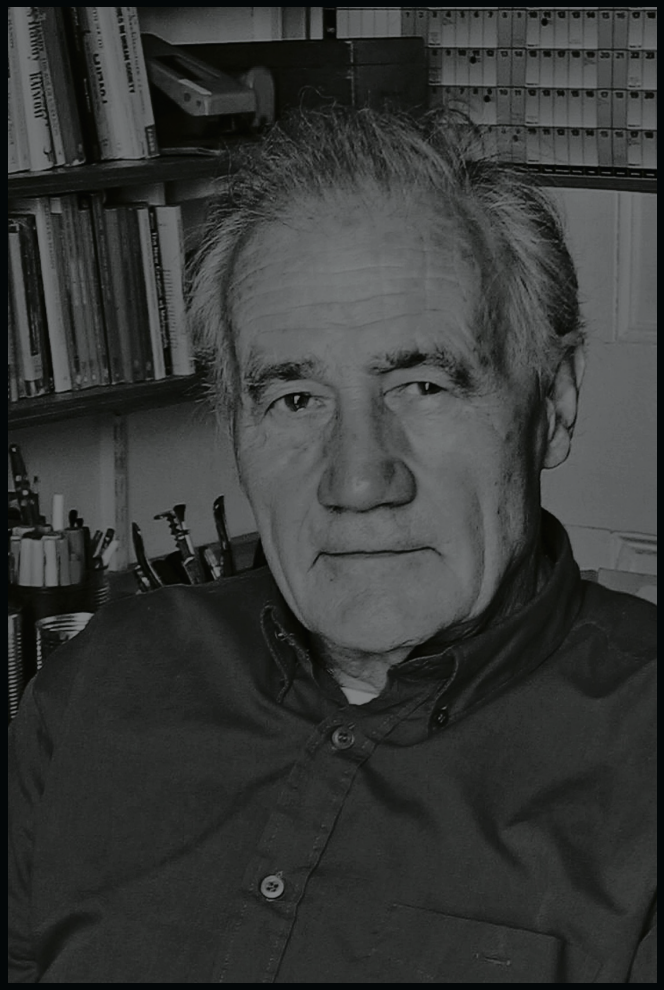
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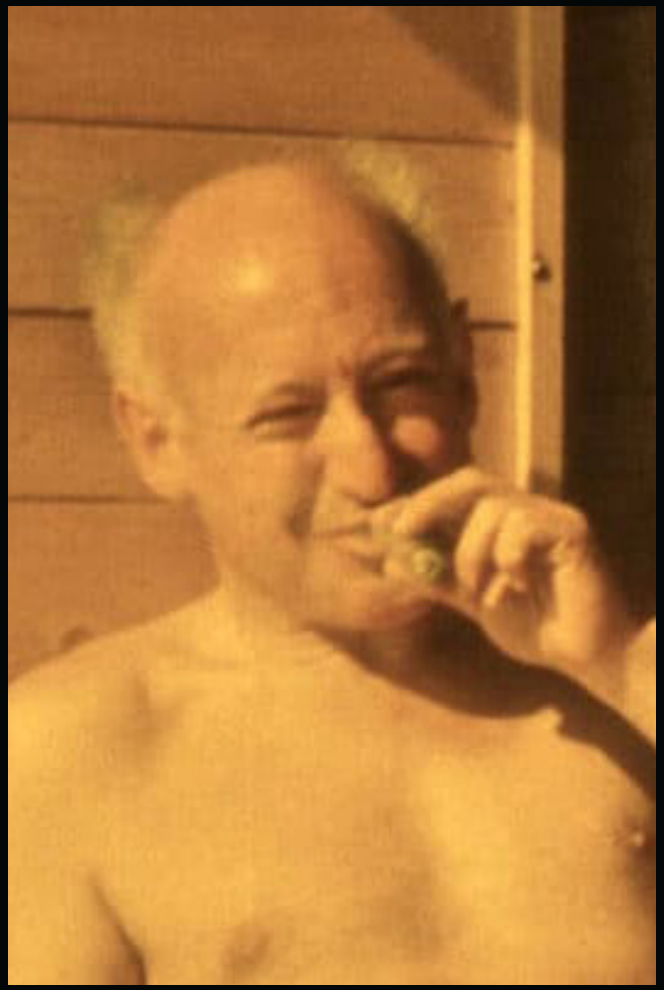
John Turner, *Freedom to Build*, 1972



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The alternative community in the Swiss Alps called Monte Verità

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Community gardening in Monte Verità

How does Segal's method give control?

1. A modular grid, dimensioned to standard timber and sheet sizes bought straight off the shelf, with no wet trades

2. Posts above ground instead of foundations and groundwork

3. Dry assembly, with constructive tolerance built into the joints

4. Each household builds its own house end to end, at its own pace, to its own level of finish

5. The house can be amended during construction, and extended afterwards



Walter Segal's temporary self-build home in Highgate, London.
Excerpt from the 1966 doumentary *Look at Life*



Self builder and kid at work, Lewisham, London, late 1970s, credits John Broome



Walter’s Way & Segal Close, Lewisham, London, 2025





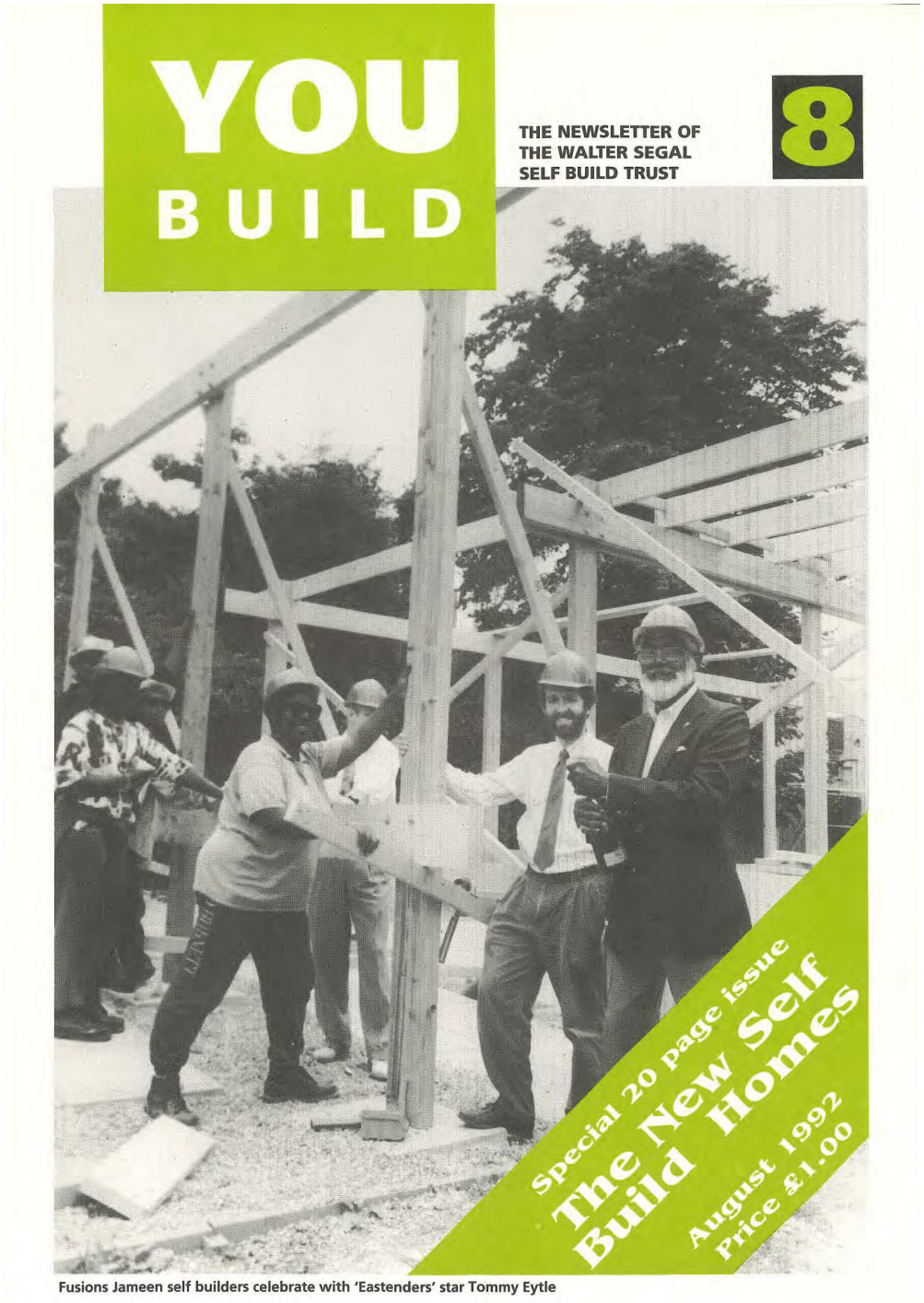
Walter’s Way & Segal Close, Lewisham, London, 2025







Walter’s Way & Segal Close, Lewisham, London, 2025



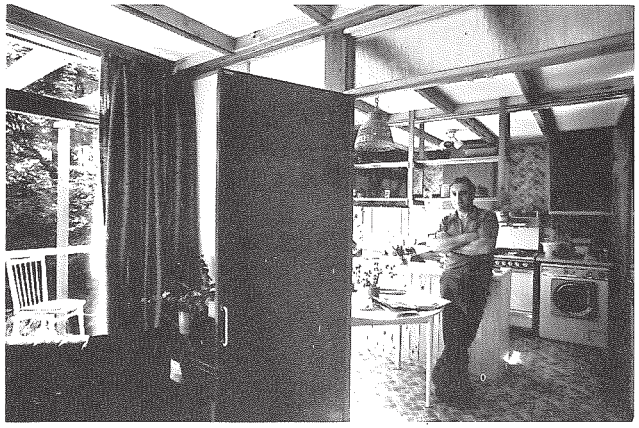
Fusions Jameen self builders celebrate with 'Eastenders' star Tommy Eytle

The Walter Segal Self Build Trust,
You Build, n°8,
August 1992

Recent Comments By Self-Builders



"Nobody will ever be able to tell me that I cannot do something – anything ever again."



"When you build yourself a house like that, and understand what a house really is, and how anybody can do it, you get re-educated. You don't need to move or trade up. You've got your own house exactly the way you want it, and you understand exactly how it went together."

Awards to the Walter Segal Self Build Trust

THE TIMES/RIBA COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE SCHEME

1987 – Community Enterprise Award presented by HRH Prince Charles

BTSHF

1987 – Building & Social Housing Foundation Award presented by the Secretary General of the United Nations in New York.

WALTER SEGAL SELF BUILD TRUST

The Trust is a non-profit making charity.
To do its work, it requires support. To this end we offer the opportunity to be registered as a member of the Trust to whom we will circulate information and send 2 newsletters per year.

MEMBERSHIP

☐ Individual £10.00 ☐ Funded organisation £15.00

☐ Unwaged individual/unfunded group £5.00

The Trust also has available:

'You Build - A Guide to Building Your Own Home' £16.00 incl. p&p plus a year's free membership.
'The House That Mum & Dad Built' 30 minute video for sale £40.00 incl. p&p.
For rent £40.00 (£30.00 deposit refunded on return of video)
Architect's Journal Special Issue on the Segal Method £2.00

Please make cheques payable to the Walter Segal Self Build Trust.

Name _____

Organisation _____

Address _____

_____

For further information, please send a s.a.e.

Walter Segal Self Build Trust,

Room 212, Panther House,
38, Mount Pleasant, London WC1X 0AP
Telephone: 071 833 4152

IYSH 1987...
U.N. INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS

ANYONE CAN BUILD THEMSELVES A HOME



Are you aware of the possibilities?

Looking ahead



Demonstration for the right to housing, Place de l'Hôtel-de-Ville, Paris, 29 March 2026, CNL



Lúcia Coz, *The Architectural Review*, John F. C. Turner, 2021

« If local decisions are made by local people,
those decisions must be ordered and supported by
institutionalized services which must be open to all. »

John Turner, *Freedom to Build*, 1972, p. 152

Thank you !

The archival documents are from:
Archives and Special Collections, University of Strathclyde
Patrick Geddes Collection, University of Edinburgh
The John F. C. Turner Archive
Walter Segal Self Build Trust
Ascona Archivio

Mail :
nikhil.calas@epfl.ch

federico.diodato@nancy.archi.fr