

Metropolitan media myths

 blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2007/10/16/metropolitan-media-myths/

2007-10-16

If you believed the image of London in much of the media you would think the only housing crisis is how to cope with soaring prices. But a [debate](#) organised by the Evening Standard showed how this is a tale of two cities.

As Conservative former Mayoral candidate Steve Norris pointed out, you can divide London in half at Waterloo. To the West is a city with four times the average national GDP. To the East people earn 75% of the average.

Surprisingly, architect Sir Terry Farrell pointed out that housing in many of the rich bits is more dense than the poor bits. So the space for new homes is in the suburbs, but also on the tarmac that surrounds big estates. And London needs 3 million new homes in the next decade or so to keep up with immigration and the explosion in separate households as lifestyles change. Everyone blamed the Nimbys but I suspect they would all be quick to oppose development in their own neighbourhoods.

A live public debate like this is a good way of raising the complexity of the problem. And it reveals the passion the public feels. Even middle-class people find themselves in homes they could not afford to buy if they had to now. The building of affordable homes has only this year caught up with the loss of council housing through the discount sales scheme. But there were fewer solutions being voiced.

My favourite was the idea that all house prices should be linked to inflation. Brilliant, simple and entirely unrealistic, but exactly the sort of fresh thinking that may address the reality behind the housing myths.

Congratulations to Veronice Wadley and the Standard for trying to get people thinking in the Capital. (And apologies to anyone reading this who does not live in This Great City) It wasn't very New Media but the fashion for public debates like is to be welcomed by anyone who loves a good row.

- Copyright © 2014 London School of Economics and Political Science