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HELD TOGETHER: LEARNING FROM THE FITZROY HOUSING REPAIR ADVISORY SERVICE

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Founded in 1975, The Fitzroy Housing Repair Advisory Service (FHRAS), was a Melbourne-based, architect-led voluntary cooperative that provided free information, advice, and referral on housing repair and maintenance issues. Through archival research and interviews, this article unpacks the historical case study of FHRAS to serve as a prompt to rethink and expand the role of the architect today to encompass practices of repair, maintenance, stewardship, and community service.

The article first introduces FHRAS and its historical and political setting. The case study is then put in conversation with the contemporary framework of repair, a growing field of interdisciplinary literature that grapples with current global conditions of breakdown. It seeks to contribute to this literature in the field of architecture by looking beyond the dominant material lens of this discourse, to explore how the need for material reform in the built environment could also shift architectural practice. To this end, the article unpacks the archive of FHRAS as a particular form of labour: as a cooperative collective that reformed disciplinary boundaries; as a situated practice in attunement with local conditions; as a shopfront public service that made architectural knowledge more widely available; and as a relational negotiation between social and material concerns.

Figure 1. Aerial view of the Housing Commission slum reclamation scheme in Fitzroy. The Age (24 April 1967).

Figure 2. Aerial view of the public housing towers on Atherton Gardens Estate, built on the slum clearance site shown above. Completed in 1971. Image created with Nearmap 2024© Nearmap Australia Pty Ltd.

Figure 3. Houses in Atherton Street, Fitzroy. This street was demolished by the Housing Commission as shown in fig 2. Photograph by Jack L. O'Brien, c. 1958. University of Melbourne Archives, UMA-ITE-1965000400179.

Figure 4. Brunswick Street, with Atherton Gardens in the background. Photograph by Alan K. Jordan, 1970. State Library of Victoria, H2010.105/611f.

INTRODUCTION: HOUSING REPAIR IN FITZROY

From a shopfront at 239 Brunswick Street, on Wednesday nights between 6 and 9pm, the Fitzroy Housing Repair Advisory Service (FHRAS) ran as a drop-in centre, providing direct, quick and free diagnosis of common building problems, like a clinic for bricks and mortar. Operating from 1975 to c. 1985, their service maintained the predominantly nineteenth century building fabric of Fitzroy — Melbourne's first suburb[1] — which remained in the aftermath of the state government's 'slum' clearances over the preceding decades of the 1950s and 60s (Fig. 1). These widespread demolitions were largely complete by the time of FHRAS' formation, however residents remained under the threat of compulsory acquisition and demolition until the 1980s. While the modernist towers built on these clearance sites provided low-cost mass-housing (Fig. 2), they came into existence via violent and paternalistic processes that displaced established communities. These neighbourhoods were seen as 'small diseased precincts within the city requiring excision for the common good'.[2]

Within Fitzroy these actions were justified through the perpetuation of its notorious status in the public imaginary, which was maintained throughout much of the twentieth century. As described by Fitzroy resident, author, activist, and academic Tony Birch, who experienced the Housing Commission's displacement first-hand, Fitzroy was 'imagined and represented as a dangerous and decaying abyss, as the archetypal urban "shadow" against the "light" of a city and society making claims to modernism and development' (Fig. 3, Fig 4).[3] A projection of immorality was cast across Fitzroy's diverse population which was largely working-class, including a strong Indigenous community, descendants of settlers from the United Kingdom, and recent post-war immigrants predominantly from Southern-Europe.[4] The 1960s and 70s then saw the influx 'of the "trendies" — the generation of students and young university-educated professionals who colonised the former working-class suburbs'.[5] These new arrivals were met with ambivalence by the extant population, many of whom wanted to maintain its working-class and migrant culture.[6] Nevertheless, this group contributed to Fitzroy's progressive history through forming social justice campaigns, adding to the density of community services, and transforming the composition of local government by replacing real estate agents and local businessmen as Councillors.[7] Fitzroy has been referred to as a social laboratory, where many Australian campaigns and reforms for social justice began including Aboriginal organisations, anti-poverty programs, aged care, family planning, community child care, community legal services, and housing reform.[8]

FHRAS was formed within these tensions by a group of young, recently-graduated architects and other building professionals who lived in the neighbourhood. Motivations varied across members. Some expressed a desire to stand up against the displacement of residents and expand architecture's remit beyond the creation of new buildings to better serve the public.[9] Others were more concerned with heritage conservation and the utility of existing buildings.[10] One member speculated there was a partial motivation to maintain a suburb that some had invested in through purchasing property.[11] Across this spectrum of social and material concerns, they were united with a common sense of stewardship for the suburb, albeit with different priorities. The concept for FHRAS was fleshed out through public meetings with founding members, residents, community workers, and

1. *Fitzroy, Melbourne's First Suburb*, ed. by Fitzroy History Society (Melbourne University Press, 1991).
2. Robert Freestone, *Urban Nation: Australia's Planning Heritage* (CSIRO Publishing in association with the Dept. of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, and the Australian Heritage Council, 2010). p. 217.
3. Anthony Birch, 'Framing Fitzroy: Contesting and (De) Constructing Place and Identity in a Melbourne Suburb' (doctoral thesis, University of Melbourne, 2002), p. 1.
4. According to the 1966 census, almost fifty percent of Fitzroy's population were born overseas at this time, overwhelmingly from Greece and Italy. However, data on Indigenous populations are not available as they were not considered citizens until after the 1967 referendum. For details on census figures for Fitzroy from 1854–1986 see 'The Fitzroy Census' in *Fitzroy, Melbourne's First Suburb*, p. 337–346.
5. Renate Howe, David Nichols, and Graeme Davison, *Trendyville: The Battle for Australia's Inner Cities* (Monash University Publishing, 2013), p. xi.
6. Birch, 'Framing Fitzroy', p. 9.
7. Jenny Wills, *Local Government and Community Services: Fitzroy — a Study in Social Planning* (Hard Pressed Publications, 1985), p. 26.
8. *A Social Justice Walk around Fitzroy — 18 April, 1999* (The Fitzroy History Society, 2004) <https://fitzroy-historysociety.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/social-justice-walk-around-fitzroy-1.pdf>, p. 1.
9. FHRAS member, interview with the author, 16 April 2025.
10. FHRAS member, interview with the author, 28 April 2025.
11. FHRAS member, interview with the author, 12 March 2025.

Figure 5. FHRAS poster with different languages. Date unknown (between 1976 and 1985). Fitzroy Library, Local History Collection, FIT 100.

Councillors from Fitzroy City Council. While FHRAS maintained close connection with local government, who provided them with nominal funds for advertising and a space to work, they operated as an independent cooperative that ran on voluntary labour.[12]

One night a week, FHRAS members took turns staffing the shopfront through a roster system. Undertaking four to five consultations an evening, they would attend to basic building problems like rising damp, rotting floorboards, faulty wiring, and leaking roofs. Residents heard about the service through council referral, word of mouth, newspaper advertisements, or posters in the neighbourhood (Fig. 5). A typical shift at the shopfront may have involved:

- Over-the-counter technical advice on repair and maintenance methods or upgrading existing facilities.
- Organising follow-up site visits for diagnosis.
- Referring reliable tradespeople and advice on how to engage them.
- Providing technical information on building components, their cost and installation.
- Distributing educational material on typical domestic construction including visual aid and demonstrations.[13]

FHRAS were visited by residents with housing repair issues across a spectrum of the community. These folks were both homeowners (eighty per cent) and renters (twenty per cent), including low-income earners, those on social service benefits, the elderly, immigrants, tenants with difficult landlords, and young professionals who had recently moved to the area. The occasional client would come to the shop after receiving repair or demolition notices from the Housing Commission, which deemed their house as 'unfit for human habitation'. Revealingly, these clients were at times referred to FHRAS by the Commission's housing standards branch, as they did not provide repair advice themselves.[14] Alongside a progressive council and other allied community services, FHRAS provided practical support and resources for a neighbourhood in the aftermath of upheaval.

While responding to a hyper-local context, FHRAS formed alongside what has been called the community architecture movement, which produced a diverse range of practices and experimentations beginning in the 1960s and largely developed in the 70s and 80s. This included participatory planning, self-build architecture, feminist cooperatives and community technical aid.[15] This global movement was not a monolith and motivations were varied, however there was a broad intention to widen the engagement between architects and society against the alienation of modern planning. In both the United States and United Kingdom (which have been more extensively documented than contexts like Australia) many organisations also formed against post-war urban renewal to keep residents and their housing in place.[16]

PUBLIC HOUSING RENEWAL TODAY

It is now a critical time to revisit the work of this group, as Melbourne (including Fitzroy) is confronted with parallel issues to those that FHRAS formed to galvanise against: widespread housing demolition and renewal programs at the hands of the state government, and the social and ecological destruction left in their wake. In September 2023, the current Victorian Labor government announced the demolition and redevelopment of Melbourne's forty-four public housing towers, built on the same sites where the post-war clearances took place. The government has not released any condition reports

12. In addition to support from local council, FHRAS received funding from the federal government which allowed them to engage a paid employee five hours a week, although it is unclear how long this lasted.
13. Dennis Carter, 'The Shopfront Architects', *The Age*, 27 August 1979.
14. Carter, 'The Shopfront Architects'.
15. Key texts that have documented this history include: *Architecture, Participation and Society*, ed. by Paul Jenkins and Leslie Forsyth (Routledge, 2010); *Architecture and Participation*, ed. by Peter Blundell Jones, Doina Petrescu, and Jeremy Till (Spon Press, 2005); Graham Towers, *Building Democracy* (UCL Press, 1995); and Nick Wates and Charles Knevitt, *Community Architecture: How People Are Creating Their Own Environment* (Penguin, 1987).
16. Examples in the United Kingdom include: ASSIST in Glasgow, Scotland; SNAP in Liverpool, England; Support in London, England. In the United States a well-known example is the Architects Renewal Committee of Harlem (ARCH) in New York among others.

or feasibility studies which justify their approach of blanket demolitions, simply stating they are no longer fit for purpose.[17] This alarming lack of transparency, coupled with a singular approach to all sites, alludes to a decision-making process that prioritises short-term economic gains from the windfalls of redevelopment such as unlocking the latent value of public land,[18] while disregarding the environmental and social costs. Independent research has found that refurbishing the towers is possible and would reduce up to fifty per cent of embodied carbon and waste compared to rebuilding, while causing far less disruption to residents.[19]

The desire for a blank slate, over the more painstaking and messy work of retaining and repairing the towers echoes logics of the post-war era clearances. Although these two renewal events are products of different political and economic conditions — the towers came into existence under the post-war project of the welfare state while their redevelopment is part of the systematic removal of public housing — they share foundational logics of paternalism and sanitisation. Together they foreground the ongoing interrelation of housing justice, community displacement, and the ecological implications of urban renewal—with dire consequences for both the housing and climate crises. Fitzroy is therefore an important site in which to ground these issues and to explore resistance through acts of repair.

THE IMMATERIAL WORK OF REPAIR

Repair has become a popular concept in contemporary scholarship, with repair studies emerging as a distinct, interdisciplinary field. Across disciplines, concepts of repair have been worn in different ways. Repair practitioners see their work as an ecological responsibility amidst throw-away culture and planned obsolescence, or as a right for owners of equipment, objects, and property.[20] Technology scholars have framed maintenance as an alternative to the fetish of innovation, techno utopianism, and relentless progress.[21] Ethnographic research by sociologists and anthropologists has framed fixing as embodied and tacit knowledge against alienated industrial production bereft of relationships.[22] Human geographers have argued attending to repair of everyday infrastructures is a quotidian act which forms social ties and solidarity.[23] Within this constellation, architects and architectural theorists have adopted repair as a counter strategy to paradigms of growth, development, consumption, ecological destruction, demolition, and waste. Strategies for retrofit and reuse of existing buildings are being explored globally across practice, research, policy, and pedagogy as more sustainable practices to redevelopment.[24] Beyond the envelope of a building, others have applied the framework of repair to planetary boundaries and regeneration of the environment through landscape-led approaches and indigenous knowledges.[25] Others

17. *Inquiry into the Redevelopment of Melbourne's Public Housing Towers*, (Parliament of Victoria, Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee, December 2025) <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/publichousingtowers>.

18. Trivess Moore and others, 'Why knock down all public housing towers when retrofit can sometimes be better?', *The Conversation*, 23 May 2024 <http://theconversation.com/why-knock-down-all-public-housing-towers-when-retrofit-can-sometimes-be-better-229186>.

19. Nigel Bertram, 'Demolition should be the last resort for melbourne's 44 public housing towers — retrofit and upgrade instead', *The Conversation*, 2 February 2025, <https://theconversation.com/demolition-should-be-the-last-resort-for-melbournes-44-public-housing-towers-retrofit-and-upgrade-instead-246327>; 'Retain, Repair, Reinvest: Flemington Estate', *OFFICE*, 2024 <https://office.org.au/project/retain-repair-reinvest-flemington-estate/>.

20. See *The Maintainers* <https://themaintainers.org>; and *The Repair Association* <https://www.repair.org>.

21. See Lee Vinsel and Andrew Russell, *The Innovation Delusion* (Currency, 2020); and Steven Jackson, 'Rethinking Repair', in *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society*, ed. Tarleton Gillespie, Pablo J. Boczkowski, and Kirsten A. Foot (MIT Press, 2014), pp. 221-240.

22. See Douglas A. Harper, *Working Knowledge: Skill and Community in a Small Shop* (University of Chicago Press, 1987); *Repair Work Ethnographies: Revisiting Breakdown Relocating Materiality*, ed. by Ignaz Strebel, Alain Bovet, Philippe Sormani (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

23. See Katherine Gibson, 'Speculations on Architecting Care Beyond the Anthropocene', in *Critical Care: Architecture and Urbanism for a Broken Planet*, ed. by Angelika Fitz and Elke Krasny (MIT Press, 2019), pp. 108-113; Jessica Barnes, 'States of Maintenance: Power, Politics, and Egypt's Irrigation Infrastructure', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 35.1 (2017), pp. 146–64.

24. In architectural practice this is championed by French architects Lacaton & Vassal with their slogan 'never demolish'. This is echoed in scholarship by Charlotte Malterre-Barthes, *A Moratorium on New Construction* (MIT Press, 2025).

25. See for example the 2025 British Pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale 'Geology of Britannic Repair' <https://venicebiennale.britishcouncil.org/history/2020s/2025-geology-britannic-repair>; and Mauro Baracco, Louise Wright and Linda Tegg, *Repair* (Actar, 2018).

home in on the building blocks of architecture and their sites of extraction, mending a carbon-intensive and environmentally destructive industry through regenerative, bio-based and recycled materials.[26]

While these approaches to repair that are developing in practice and discourse are encouraging, it is important to take stock of some of the risks reparative concepts present in architecture. These risks include aestheticization through conflating meaningful processes of repair with aesthetics of visible mending such as bricolage, patching, darning, or the raw-finish aesthetic of many reuse projects. There is a risk of fetishising the bottom-up practice of repair, despite for many being a strategy for survival. As put by Beatriz Colomina and Mark Wigley, architectural designers and theorists who embrace 'the ordinary' while critiquing the elitism of the field, instead 'tend to patronise, colonise and extract from what they celebrate'.[27] There's the risk that repair (like care) is smothered as an affective balm in discourse and practice to describe do-good actions that cover more nefarious realities Patricia Stuelke warns us that 'the feel-good fix that the reparative offers' can sidestep or mask systemic issues.[28]

Valeria Graziano and Kim Trogal warn that isolating the material aspects of repair alone can lead to apoliticism and aestheticization through 'detaching repair as a regime of practice from existing social relations, therefore closing off the political capacities it might engender'.[29] They examine repair through its relational potential that produces possibilities for 'alternative organisational models to those centred around growth'.[30] Alongside other scholars, they have directly examined fixing as a social practice, more strongly articulating the organisational, collective and political capacities of repair work. A recent exhibition and publication series *The Great Repair* notes that we should focus on 'the self-repair of architecture as a discipline: the repair of its notion of work, its work processes, its understanding of authorship, its education system, and its forms of communication'.[31]

Aligning with this framework, this paper considers how the need for material reform in the built environment can also lead to shifts in how we work as architects today. In the face of climate breakdown, there is now an urgency to foreground fixing and maintaining over cycles of redevelopment and destruction. This not only requires a different form of architecture but different architects. The following sections present a reading of FHRAS alongside repair literature as a practical and theoretical lens, to critically explore how FHRAS' work of urban maintenance might present a different and distinct form of architectural practice and labour. FHRAS did not employ repair as an aesthetic style or a romanticised concept, avoiding these risks through the invisible and immaterial aspects of their work. FHRAS rethought office structures and disciplinary boundaries as a cooperative organisation; it was a situated practice in response to local conditions; it shifted the architect-client relationship as a free and accessible service; and it was engaged in a relational negotiation between the social and material fabric of the suburb.

COOPERATIVE WORK

Graziano and Trogal argue repair produces alternative social forms, where it plays a role in '"fixing" organisational designs […] a regime of practice that fosters the imagining of alternative social scenarios'.[32] FHRAS was a cooperative organisation, which was both a pragmatic and creative endeavour. Pragmatically, a cooperative structure provided a legal framework for FHRAS and defined the internal workings of the group. Creatively, it destabilised hierarchies of the office and reformed disciplinary boundaries, finding new ways to shape and manage the built environment with others. Design cooperatives

26. Such as the work of London-based practice Material Cultures <https://materialcultures.org/>.

27. Beatriz Colomina and Mark Wigley, 'Foreword', in *Everyday Matters: Contemporary Approaches to Architecture*, ed. Vanessa Grossman and Ciro Miguel (Ruby Press, 2021), pp. 6–9 (p. 7).

28. Patricia Stuelke, *The Ruse of Repair: US Neoliberal Empire and the Turn from Critique* (Duke University Press, 2021), p. 30.

29. Valeria Graziano and Kim Trogal, 'Repair Matters', *Ephemera*, 19.2 (2019), pp. 203–27 (p. 204).

30. Graziano and Trogal, 'Repair Matters', p. 205.

31. *ARCH+ The Great Repair: Politics for the Repair Society — A Reader*, ed. by Florian Hertweck and others (Spector Books, 2023), p. 7.

32. Graziano and Trogal, 'Repair Matters', p. 205.

were forming globally at the time within the broader community architecture movement of the 1970s and 80s, where architects alongside allied disciplines were experimenting with different forms of the architectural office. These experiments broadly sought to reform the industry and its work processes internally to work with democratic and participatory processes externally, particularly on projects in the public sector. Instead of the partner or associate practice structure which centre the authorship and charisma of an individual architect, design cooperatives provided a member-owned and -controlled, egalitarian alternative.[33] As a voluntary cooperative of paying members, FHRAS employed a one member, one vote system with a governing constitution that defined principles and objectives, worker responsibilities, meeting and voting processes, membership, and finance.[34]

FHRAS was also based in a collective working environment within the Fitzroy Council's Social Planning Office (SPO). Housed in a former supermarket on Fitzroy's high street, the SPO was an umbrella organisation that united council services with other government agencies and independent community groups. The one-stop shop housed health services, counselling, child and aged care, social workers, women's services, domiciliary services, housing groups, rental co-ops, town planning aid, and FHRAS (Fig. 6, Fig. 7). While FHRAS was an independent organisation and didn't work directly with these groups, the interdisciplinary setting of the SPO created a local, comprehensive community service where allied groups relied on one another for assistance, solidarity, and client referral.

The umbrella organisation of the SPO also employed a horizontal structure where staff worked across teams, shared administrative responsibilities and came together for collective decision making, reviewing of commitments, planning new services, and social action campaigns. There were regular staff roundtables on the office's self-described 'radical and innovatory approach', formally carving out time to translate theory into practice.[35] The SPO's cooperative work required ongoing discussion and exchange, forming internal discursive structures that reflected their external objective of democratic planning processes prioritising resident participation.[36] The interdisciplinary shape of the SPO reflected their structural approach to welfare delivery. As explained by founder Jenny Wills, rather than providing isolated responses within disciplinary siloes through 'unconnected mopping up measures dealing with personal and social problems' they sought holistic structural change to create a system promoting the wellbeing for all people across social, physical and economic planning.[37] This placed collective action at the centre of their agenda, with a coordinated organisation that meant staff were well placed 'to expose the contradictions of the system and in doing so to make a contribution to broader based action for change'.[38] Both FHRAS and the SPO were embedding processes they wanted to see in the city — more equitable, just, and locally-considered responses to urban concerns — within their own practice.

Beyond the SPO, many of FHRAS' members were involved in other local actions, campaigns and community groups across urban conservation, heritage, and housing, collectively working towards different ways to shape and manage the neighbourhood. FHRAS wasn't an isolated group or response, but a small part of a wider network of local organisations and campaigns that brought together people with diverse skill sets and interests, creating fertile ground for change. As expressed by one of FHRAS' founders: 'everyone jumped on board and suddenly you had a group of people who could do stuff'.[39]

33. 'Co-Operative Architects', *The Architects Journal*, 16 February 1983, pp. 42-45; Towers, *Building Democracy*, pp. 118-119.

34. 'Constitution of the Fitzroy Housing Repair Advisory Service (Preliminary)', [1976-1980], personal archive of FHRAS member.

35. Wills, *Local Government and Community Services*, p. 39.

36. Wills, *Local Government and Community Services*, p. 39.

37. Wills, *Local Government and Community Services*, p.40.

38. Wills, *Local Government and Community Services*, p.45.

39. FHRAS member, interview with the author, 16 April 2025.

HOUSING SERVICES

FITZROY COLLINGWOOD ACCOMODATION SERVICE CO-OPERATIVE LIMITED

Sue O'Brien, Felicity Browning.

The Co-op provides the following services to Fitzroy and Collingwood residents:

Bond Fund assistance with removals
Two emergency houses where eligible residents can stay for up to six weeks.
Sponsorship to the Brookes Crescent area.
Sponsorship to lone persons estates in the area.

The Co-operative has two part-time workers based at the Social Planning Office: one to run emergency housing, and advise both Councils on housing policy, another helps Council develop policy on retaining rooming houses. The Co-operative is open to the public to join. All enquiries are welcome.

SHELTER VICTORIA Iain Stewart

Shelter is a housing action and consumer group which provides information on housing actions, government policies and programme developments and helps develop local and regional housing groups.

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(Wednesday 6.00 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.)

Architects and builders voluntarily provide a free service for information/referral on housing repairs and building problems, including on-site inspection and advice.

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INDEPENDANT COMMUNITY GROUPS

FITZROY ADVISORY SERVICE
Debbie Rossdale, Bobbie O'Brien

The F.A.S. is concerned with information and social action for residents and community groups and links residents with services and agencies.

It has information and contacts covering a wide range of areas which include Health, Adult Education, Ethnic Affairs, Legal/Citizens rights, Community Action Groups. A list of local services, which is updated regularly, is available from the F.A.S.

The F.A.S. is available to provide a comprehensive orientation to new workers in Fitzroy. A translation service is available for agencies, community groups and schools. It is also a contact point for people who would like to become involved with the local community newspaper. If you have any queries, or an event or group you would like to publicise, please contact the F.A.S. (Debbie or Bobbie).

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Figure 6. Pamphlet for the Social Planning Office. Date unknown (from 1976-1985). Fitzroy, Library Local History Collection, FIT 156.

Figure 7. The Social Planning Office at 239 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy. A converted supermarket where FHRAS operated from. Date unknown (between 1976 and 1985). Photograph by Suzanne Dance. Suzanne Dance personal archive.

In a contemporary context, Aaron Cayer and Peggy Deamer alongside others from the The Architecture Lobby, argue that cooperative organising can restructure the architectural profession by overcoming some of its entrenched internal issues including 'competition, secrecy, and profit- and production-driven labour that discourages [design practitioners] from sharing resources, personnel, and working cooperatively across firms and industries', instead foregrounding 'care over profit, use-values over exchange values, and the sharing of knowledge over private appropriation in order to create more equitable, just, and liveable neighbourhoods and cities'.[40] Cooperative structures can band together architects with practitioners from other industries, dissolving disciplinary siloes to create a co-ordinated front in local contexts. The example of FHRAS and the SPO demonstrates how this can provide integrated local services, as well as structures for collective action such as contesting iniquitous state or developer-led urban processes.

Collective knowledge

Cooperative methods have epistemological consequences—producing different knowledge to that of siloed architectural practice. The coordination of services in the SPO and the wider neighbourhood created a network where different forms of expertise could be put towards solving a problem, or the problem could be completely reframed through asking different questions. Through uniting previously disparate organisations, the SPO could address multipronged issues in the same place. Areas of unmet need could be collectively identified through thinking laterally and making connections across sectors. As explained by Wills: 'There's no point in just giving someone food if they're desperate, where's the roof over their head? So that sort of questioning always led to doing something else'.[41] As the adage goes, if the only tool you have is a hammer you tend to see every problem as a nail. FHRAS' relationships within the SPO and the wider neighbourhood expanded who they worked with, the knowledge and tools available to them, how they approached their work, and maybe even how they saw the world.

What form of knowledge is produced by repair itself? Technology scholar Steven Jackson poses the question: 'can breakdown, maintenance, and repair confer special epistemic advantage in our thinking about technology? Can the fixer know and see different things — indeed, different worlds — than the better-known figures of "designer" or "user"?'.[42] Jackson explains that while innovation is perceived to happen in moments of 'quasi-mythical origination', it is in fact sites of failure that provide the conditions for creativity, imagination, and experimentation—not subsequent to innovation but imperative to it. Rather than the 'property of individual minds, innovation is […] organized around problems […] simultaneously specific and in some measure collective in nature'.[43] This is echoed by Christopher Henke, who explains that repair provides a means for learning, improvisation, and adaptation through real-time and contextually specific problem solving.[44] These failures might also provide moments for pause, reflection, and self-assessment by 'interrupting the expected flow of things'.[45]

While sites of breakdown and failure might be fertile ground for collective learning as discussed by these scholars, in the context of this study they are also representative of deep inequalities in the urban environment. The state of housing disrepair both in the so-called slum dwellings cleared in the mid-twentieth century and the public housing towers of today have been created through structural neglect and managed decline.[46] Within this context, FHRAS' cooperative organisation created a porosity between disciplines, forms of knowledge, and the public through which

40. Aaron Cayer and others, 'Socializing Practice', in *Spatial Practices: Modes of Action and Engagement with the City*, ed. Melanie Dodd (Routledge, 2019), pp. 245–55 (p. 245)

41. Jenny Wills, interview with Meg Lee and Rosa Simonelli, *The Fitzroy History Society Oral History Project*, 11 November 2019 <https://fitzroyhistorysociety.org.au/jenny-wills/>.

42. Jackson, 'Rethinking Repair', p. 229.

43. Jackson, 'Rethinking Repair', p. 228.

44. Christopher Henke, 'The Mechanics of Workplace Order: Toward a Sociology of Repair', *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 4 (2000) pp. 55–81.

45. Francisco Martinez and Patrick Laviolette, *Repair, Brokenness, Breakthrough: Ethnographic Responses* (Berghahn Books, 2019), p. 2.

46. In the context of public housing, managed decline refers to the government systematically removing funding, provision and maintenance, putting public housing into states of poor condition which strengthens the argument for redevelopment. See David Kelly, Libby Porter and Priya Kunjan 'The Impossibility of "Housing Rights"', *Overland Literary Journal*, 8 April 2025 <https://overland.org.au/2025/04/the-impossibility-of-housing-rights/>.

architects could better connect to one another and other industries — together taking responsibility for the built environment and those that lived within it.

SITUATED WORK

FHRAS was a distinctly local operation, serving residents of the Fitzroy municipality and surrounding suburbs. Working with a geographically defined public rather than a singular client and site, FHRAS reconceptualised the boundaries of an architectural project. Their work was not restricted by property boundaries, strict contractual arrangements, timelines, or budgets. It was an ongoing project and responsibility that extended to an entire neighbourhood. Their individual micro, targeted, direct, and immediate repair and maintenance advice together amounted to a more expansive project: a quiet stewardship of a suburb and its residents. As such, the work of FHRAS was both more micro and macro in scope than a typical architectural project—attending to the minute material issues of rot, damp, cracks, and leaks to achieve a broader social, political, and material agenda at the scale of the suburb (and beyond).

Social infrastructure

A foundational belief of the SPO was that local government was the appropriate realm to deliver, plan, and co-ordinate social welfare. Local delivery was seen as crucial to make these services 'more accessible, accountable, and co-ordinated; to link informal and formal support networks and… [for] administrative and management responsibility to [be at] the point closest to service delivery'.[47] The shopfront with full-height windows littered with posters made its services visible, known, and accessible to the neighbourhood from the street. Shopfronts were used in the broader community architecture movement to create a direct interface with the neighbourhoods they sought to serve. In England, architects Ralph Erskine and Vernon Gracie set up a former undertaker's shopfront as an office and drop-in centre while working on the redevelopment of the Byker neighbourhood in 1968. An open-door policy for residents created a form of participatory urban management where 'the office became a focus for communication with local people who would drop in to seek help, to inspect the work in progress, or to pass the time of day'.[48] Similarly, the SPO was seen as a local social infrastructure, described as an active place shared amongst staff and volunteers along with residents and local groups who could book the space for meetings and events after hours. 'The community used to come into the office and talk to us about all sorts of things. It was a place that was full of characters, and we were probably characters along with them, I suppose!'.[49] There was a lack of anonymity to the office which was approachable, staffed, and open — in contrast to the fortress-like edifice of the nearby town hall or the invisible and remote structures of the state government that administered housing welfare.

Local feedback

This on-the-ground operation placed the SPO and FHRAS at the nexus of residents and local government, linking formal and informal networks, which enabled information to be fed from the neighbourhood back into council. This feedback loop enabled more rapid response to local need and the adjustment of services, creating a model that was flexible, adaptable, and nimble. In a contemporary study of an on-site maintenance service for council flats in South London, Juliet Davis similarly observes that these localised models (in contrast to remote bureaucratic services) can better respond to the lives, priorities, and needs of residents. She argues they provide a level of attentiveness toward both buildings and residents that a set of revolving contractors cannot, allowing for an attunement to the socio-technical assemblage of the estates.[50] These local

47. Wills, *Local Government and Community Services*, p. 1.

48. Towers, *Building Democracy*, p. 51.

49. Jenny Wills, interview with Meg Lee and Rosa Simonelli.

50. Juliet Davis, 'Maintenance and Repair as Care with Generosity', in *Generosity and Architecture*, ed. by Mhairi McVicar, Stephen Kite, and Charles Drozynski (Routledge, 2022), pp. 173–88.

models can provide more immediate, responsive, and informed services through their ongoing presence in and commitment to a place. This not only enables better management of the built environment through site-specific knowledge, but their visibility also makes these services answerable and therefore accountable to residents. In the context of recent housing clearances or a previously poorly managed council estate, implementing a local and visible model of maintenance might help to rebuild levels of trust between residents, workers and local government.

Situated knowledge

Donna Haraway explains that knowledge is situated: locatable, partial, embodied and produced from specific places and relations rather than from detached or universal perspectives.[51] FHRAS' members formed a situated understanding of Fitzroy through both working and living in the neighbourhood. Some also volunteered to work on the first heritage framework of the suburb, developing an intimate understanding of the urban fabric through walking the streets of Fitzroy before work, rating, and itemising each building (Fig. 8).[52] This detailed, almost surgical attention to the built fabric stands in stark contrast to the windscreen surveys that took place decades earlier, where members of the Housing Commission would condemn entire streets to demolition on a drive-by analysis (Fig.9) — what Haraway might refer to as a 'conquering gaze from nowhere'.[53] FHRAS developed a knowledge of distinct local conditions including climate, soil, particular tree species, Victorian building stock and their material characteristics. This can be seen in repair articles they published in the local newspaper, reflecting issues they heard in the shopfront or encountered on site back to the wider neighbourhood. Responding to both specific material conditions (such as Victorian era bluestone foundations and local geological substrates) and community blight (providing strategies to alleviate noise issues caused by nearby highways), these publications distributed FHRAS' knowledge about distinctly local concerns.

Like local work, repair is an 'ongoing, situated inquiry'[54] often requiring specific and nuanced knowledge in response to unique breaks. Jackson argues that 'under the conditions of modern industrial production, [repair] may constitute one of our most significant sites and sources of sociotechnical difference […] by which technological difference is produced and fit is accomplished'.[55] This is echoed by Davis, who explains that repair is not a mundane event that happens after design, but is rather a process that is akin to it, addressing connections between 'building, use, and experience which are […] always in flux as lives unfold, materials decay and perceptions shift'.[56] Fixing or tinkering with things not only keeps them in good or working condition but can transform, mould, or *fit* them to local material and social contexts over time. Davis provides the example of minor works done to a group of apartments that allowed elderly residents to age-in-place as their physical abilities changed.[57] This notion of fitting can be both material and social. Alain Bovet and Ignaz Strebel observe how the work of building caretakers can attune or orient a resident to the technical-material setting of their house through conversation, jokes, or in-situ tutorials that calibrate this relationship. 'Once the repair has come to a close, the caretaker and the tenants have learned something: the thing has changed and its future use by the tenant will not be the same.'[58] Local housing repair and maintenance can subtly tune a dwelling to the resident, or the resident to a dwelling, through ongoing conversations, adaptations, tests, and repairs. These acts attend to individual needs in small but meaningful ways—a dwelling is adjusted to better fit a body or a life, or perceptions shift and change a resident's experience of or relationship with their home. Through a targeted, precise, and nuanced local practice in attunement with particular social and

51. Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies* 14.3 (1988) pp. 575–99.

52. Suzanne Dance, interview by Meg Lee and Hilary McPhee, *The Fitzroy History Society Oral History Project*, 3 November 2016 <https://fitzroyhistorysociety.org.au/suzanne-dance/>.

53. Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges', p. 581

54. Stephen Graham and Nigel Thrift, 'Out of Order: Understanding Repair and Maintenance', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 24.3, pp. 1-25 (p. 4).

55. Jackson, 'Rethinking Repair', p. 227.

56. Davis, 'Maintenance and Repair as Care with Generosity', p. 182.

57. Davis, 'Maintenance and Repair as Care with Generosity', p. 182.

58. Alain Bovet and Ignaz Strebel, 'Job Done: What Repair Does to Caretakers, Tenants and Their Flats', in *Repair Work Ethnographies: Revisiting Breakdown Relocating Materiality*, ed. by Alain Bovet, Ignaz Strebel, and Philippe Sormani (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 90.

Figure 8. South Fitzroy conservation study: negatives, Jacobs Lewis Vines Architects, Dr M.B. Lewis, Fitzroy Urban Planning Office, 1979. Fitzroy Library, Local History Collection, LHREF BOX 10/ LH29/58.

Figure 9. Collection of slides produced by the Housing Commission of Victoria, 1958-1982. State Library of Victoria, Pictures collection, H2015.15/1-602, PCLTSL, 113 BOX 1-3.

material conditions, FHRAS' on-the-ground practice was a situated response that framed architectural work as an ongoing stewardship of a place.

RELATIONAL WORK

FHRAS' members felt that the industry had cut itself off from the general public, with their services 'too expensive, and often not applicable to the needs of most people'.[59] They were shifting the identity of the entrepreneurial architect that could only be afforded by a privileged few, aligning their practice with services like the local general practitioner or legal aid in response to public need. In documenting the history of the community architecture movement, many have observed a desire to decentralise the management of the built environment, shifting the professional identity of the architect from expert to something more akin to facilitator or educator in supporting ordinary people to improve their environment, particularly those without the funds, means or power to do so.[60] FHRAS was a mediator between everyday people and everyday housing. This work was largely relational, not delivered through drawings, but through conversation, explanation, and education, revealing the intersection of social and material concerns in housing.

Public resources and education

FHRAS sought to make architectural knowledge more widely available through public resources and education. Through conversations in the shopfront or on site, members were demystifying common housing problems by sharing technical knowledge and skills with residents. In addition to one-on-one exchanges, FHRAS created a number of collective resources for the local population. They built relationships with tradespeople, maintained a database of reliable contractors of satisfactory quality and price, and provided forms with instructions on how to engage them. They held a library of trade literature for basic building and maintenance products, including visual aid and pricing. A tool library was set up with Fitzroy Council for those undertaking their own repairs. At one point, FHRAS applied for a grant to establish a free materials exchange yard to provide essential building materials from discarded stock, repaired and stored for reuse.[61] Members took turns penning articles for *The Melbourne Times* that functioned as DIY manuals with titles like 'How flash are your flashings?' and 'Solving those cracking problems', explaining in simple terms how to address common housing faults (Fig. 10, Fig. 11). While manuals can be ascribed to both conservative and progressive politics — upholding ideologies of liberalism and individual private property ownership or the more collective endeavour of maintaining the commons[62] — education and skill building remain at their core. To the latter point, Shannon Mattern observes that the manual's ability to distribute knowledge can resist the gatekeeping of information for private interests, as can be seen in the contemporary right to repair movement and the proliferation of open-source manuals.[63] FHRAS' locally distributed publications outlined clear diagnosis and action through accessible language, passing on know-how to the wider neighbourhood and expanding their client base beyond those that came to the shop. Manuals, equipment libraries, trade literature, and referral lists made knowledge and tools available to all—sharing for public benefit rather than gatekeeping for professional or private interests.

Repair as mediation and negotiation

In shifting from designing buildings to facilitating urban maintenance, FHRAS members were engaged less in drawing and more in acts of negotiation. Recent ethnographic studies in fields of sociology and anthropology have emphasised the importance of sociality in activities of repair. Drawing on

59. Carter, 'The Shopfront Architects'.

60. See Wates and Knevitt, *Community Architecture*, p. 20; Towers, *Building Democracy*, p. 65; and Jenkins and Forsyth, *Architecture, Participation and Society*, pp. 23-38.

61. Carter, 'The Shopfront Architects'.

62. Shannon Mattern, 'Step by Step', *Places Journal*, 27 February 2024 <https://placesjournal.org/article/step-by-step-repair-manuals-political-ecology/>.

63. Mattern, 'Step by Step'.

RENOVATING & DECORATING

PROVIDED BY THE FITZROY HOUSING REPAIR ADVISORY SERVICE

Has your floor 'gone'?

Your house may be brick or weatherboard, but it probably has a wooden floor. Its a real problem when it slopes like Mt. Everest, or the boards crumble away beneath your feet. Or when you swalk across the room, do you feel like you're on a trampoline?

These are warning signs that your floor needs running repairs pretty soon. Many floor repairs can be done by the careful handyman, although some work should be left to the experts.

It's common in old houses that floor bearers and even the joists, are almost buried and the dirt is far too close to the floorboards. In this case, floorboards have probably crumbled and decayed - somsone may have already gone through!

To remove rotted floorboards use an electric circular saw set to ¾" cutting depth. Run the saw across the floorboards parallel to a line of nails and about 1" away from them, on the two sides of the section of floor to be removed. Then run the saw between two boards on the other side. You can now lift out the rotten boards.

Now is the time to pinpoint the cause of the trouble. The soil underneath may be too high. You should dig it out to a depth of at least 15" below the floor level.

Often if the bad section is up against a brick internal wall, you find that removing the soil kills two birds with one stone!

As well as making the flooring rotten, the soil built up could be causing the patch of rising damp and discoloration in the wall itself.

If so, the damp should dry out over the next couple of months after which you can repaint.

Replacing the floor is quite easy. Suitable materials are tongue and groove boards of same size as original (new or sound second hand ones). If you have to do it very cheaply, a panel of ¼" chipboard cut to size will do.

Nail an extra length of 4" x 2" along the joists where you made the sawcut. Now the new floor can be fixed on the edges, and nailed back onto the joists in the centre.

If the soil is already at the correct depth (15" below floor level) as soon as you lift the rotten boards up, the answer is probably excessively wet ground, orlack of sub-floor ventilation.

[redacted]

Wet sub-floor soil can be due to broken drains, leaking water pipes, water flowing under the house from downpipes, and lack of proper sub-soil drainage.

We'll be writing another article on sub-floor ventilation as this is a topic in itself!

When you're doubtful as to why the soil is wet or how to correct this, or how to improve the sub-floor ventilation, contact FHRAS for advice and names of tradesmen.

Sloping floors, (common in weatherboard houses), and bouncy floors are probably signs of failure in floor stumps or bearers.

In a weatherboard the slope is often downhill to the outside wall from the centre inside. This normally requires a specialist firm to jack up the outside wall and replace the outside line of stumps.

Sometimes a new stump is needed in the corner of a room, say next to the passage. Contact FHRAS for advice and information on restumping work and names of reblocking firms.

The bouncy floor, often found in brick houses, requires a couple of new stumps in the centre of the room. A handyman could attempt this by taking up the flooring directly above the bearer in the middle of the sagging floor.

Wedge the bearer up to level by temporary struts between the ground and underside of the bearer.

Built two or three new 9" x 9" brick piers (spaced about 4' apart) under the bearers, laid in waterproof mortar (e.g. Nonporite added to mix). At the underside of the bearer, place a foot square piece of aluminium damp proof course (e.g. "Alcor") on top of the pier.

[redacted]

Remove the temporary struts. Then wedge timber packing pieces between the damp proof course and the bearer until all sag movement and bounce is completely eliminated.

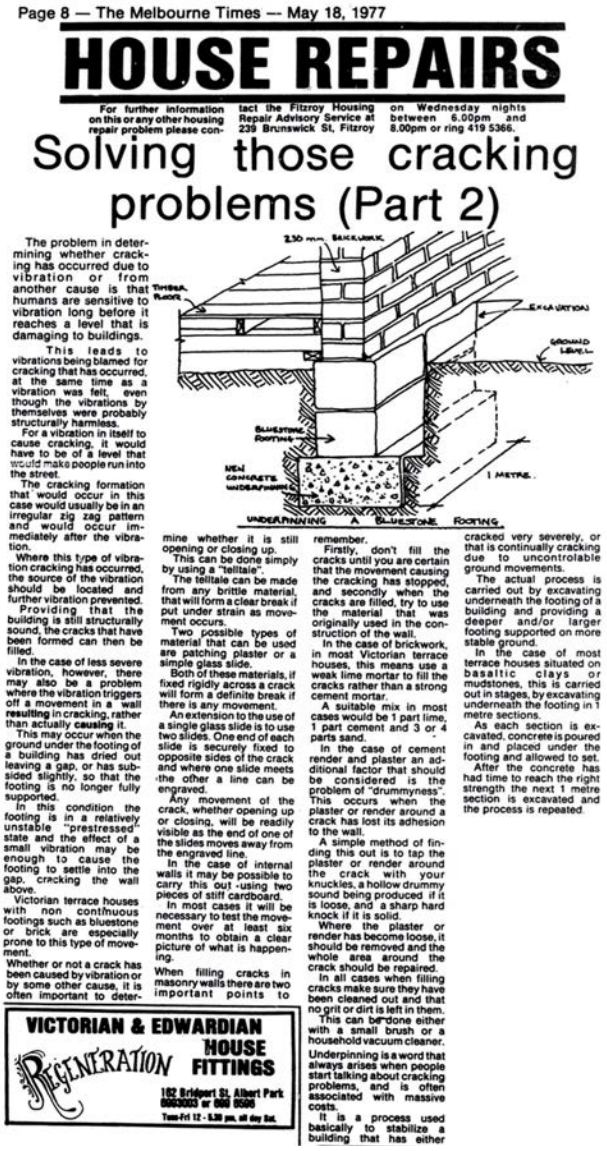
Then you can replace the boards.

The next articles will give more information about floor problems, and replacing timber floors with concrete slabs. Meanwhile FHRAS will be closed for Christmas after December 17.

We'll reopen on Wednesday 2nd february 1977 at 6pm.

The Fitzroy Housing Repair Advisory Service (FHRAS) will be closed from 18th December 1976 until 2nd February 1977.

Figure 10. 'Has your floor "gone"?' by FHRAS in The Melbourne Times (December 15, 1976).



Page 8 — The Melbourne Times — May 18, 1977

HOUSE REPAIRS

For further information on this or any other housing repair problem please contact the Fitzroy Housing Repair Advisory Service at 239 Brunswick St, Fitzroy on Wednesday nights between 6.00pm and 8.00pm or ring 419 5366.

Solving those cracking problems (Part 2)

The problem in determining whether cracking has occurred due to vibration or from another cause is that humans are sensitive to vibration long before it reaches a level that is damaging to buildings.

This leads to vibrations being blamed for cracking that has occurred, at the same time as a vibration was felt, even though the vibrations by themselves were probably structurally harmless.

For a vibration in itself to cause cracking, it would have to be of a level that would make people run into the street.

The cracking formation that would occur in this case would usually be in an irregular zig zag pattern and would occur immediately after the vibration.

Where this type of vibration cracking has occurred, the source of the vibration should be located and further vibration prevented.

Providing that the building is still structurally sound, the cracks that have been formed can then be filled.

In the case of less severe vibration, however, there may also be a problem where the vibration triggers off a movement in a wall **resulting** in cracking, rather than actually **causing** it.

This may occur when the ground under the footing of a building has dried out leaving a gap, or has subsided slightly, so that the footing is no longer fully supported.

In this condition the footing is in a relatively unstable "prestressed" state and the effect of a small vibration may be enough to cause the footing to settle into the gap, cracking the wall above.

Victorian terrace houses with non continuous footings such as bluestone or brick are especially prone to this type of movement.

Whether or not a crack has been caused by vibration or by some other cause, it is often important to determine whether it is still opening or closing up.

This can be done simply by using a "telltale".

The telltale can be made from any brittle material, that will form a clear break if put under strain as movement occurs.

Two possible types of material that can be used are patching plaster or a simple glass slide.

Both of these materials, if fixed rigidly across a crack will form a definite break if there is any movement.

An extension to the use of a single glass slide is to use two slides. One end of each slide is securely fixed to opposite sides of the crack and where one slide meets the other a line can be engraved.

Any movement of the crack, whether opening up or closing, will be readily visible as the end of one of the slides moves away from the engraved line.

In the case of internal walls it may be possible to carry this out -using two pieces of stiff cardboard.

In most cases it will be necessary to test the movement over at least six months to obtain a clear picture of what is happening.

When filling cracks in masonry walls there are two important points to remember.

Firstly, don't fill the cracks until you are certain that the movement causing the cracking has stopped, and secondly when the cracks are filled, try to use the material that was originally used in the construction of the wall.

In the case of brickwork, in most Victorian terrace houses, this means use a weak lime mortar to fill the cracks rather than a strong cement mortar.

A suitable mix in most cases would be 1 part lime, 1 part cement and 3 or 4 parts sand.

In the case of cement render and plaster an additional factor that should be considered is the problem of "drummyness". This occurs when the plaster or render around a crack has lost its adhesion to the wall.

A simple method of finding this out is to tap the plaster or render around the crack with your knuckles, a hollow drummy sound being produced if it is loose, and a sharp hard knock if it is solid.

Where the plaster or render has become loose, it should be removed and the whole area around the crack should be repaired.

In all cases when filling cracks make sure they have been cleaned out and that no grit or dirt is left in them.

This can be done either with a small brush or a household vacuum cleaner.

Underpinning is a word that always arises when people start talking about cracking problems, and is often associated with massive costs.

It is a process used basically to stabilize a building that has either cracked very severely, or that is continually cracking due to uncontrolable ground movements.

The actual process is carried out by excavating underneath the footing of a building and providing a deeper and/or larger footing supported on more stable ground.

In the case of most terrace houses situated on basaltic clays or mudstones, this is carried out in stages, by excavating underneath the footing in 1 metre sections.

As each section is excavated, concrete is poured in and placed under the footing and allowed to set.

After the concrete has had time to reach the right strength the next 1 metre section is excavated and the process is repeated.

Fig.11. 'Solving those cracking problems (Part 2)' by FHRAS in The Melbourne Times (March 1, 1978)

observations from research at both local and institutional scales, Henke describes repair as 'a form of relational negotiation that mediates the connections between people, organisations and institutions, and materiality'.[64] The term negotiation points to the discursive reality of fixing things — discussion, dialogue, compromise and sometimes conflict required to reach a solution. Henke explains that the relational work of repair is linked to its proximity to faults, glitches, and errors, which 'often opens up disruption and unease, breakdowns may reveal competing narratives of what is wrong, who is at fault, and what should be done'. [65] This is echoed by Strebel and Bovet, where they observe a key feature of residential repair work is its 'orientation towards the intersubjective', where even simple technical jobs 'reconfigure the relations among caretaker, broken thing, and tenant'.[66] Mattern argues that the skills developed through the labour of repair — in-situ problem solving, attentiveness, improvisation — translates to the 'soft skills' of 'listening and responding to customers, and in building networks of knowledge exchange'.[67]

Can these observations of relational negotiation be seen between FHRAS and their clients? Snapshots of resident profiles exist in member's personal archives from Handyman reports and notes:

> 'A middle-aged working lady living alone […] in doubtful health and suffering from an acute anxiety state. [Her house has] severe foundation troubles […] the ceilings have dropped so much as 4-6 inches […] there does not appear to be a true vertical anywhere, nor many horizontals […]
>
> 'An 85-year-old widow, age pensioner, living alone in her own house, a three-roomed single storey terrace. Beyond partial deafness and blindness, she seems to be in reasonable health […] I discovered a large hole in one corner with developing rot in several places. She then showed me her bedroom, the floor of which is in a dangerously decayed state'.[68]

In these examples, resident and material defect are described in the case notes with almost equal weight, as though information regarding the person and the house were both crucial in resolving the issue, demonstrating how 'social and material forms of vulnerability in housing can intersect'. [69] While not all who used FHRAS' service were vulnerable people, volunteers would have talked through diagnosis, explained options, and determined a course of action with all clients. Was this work alleviating (or exacerbating) unease or anxieties created by material dilapidation? Were they providing a sense of stability? While mending leaking roofs, rising damp, cracks, perhaps FHRAS were also attending to other things—social relations in a suburb reeling from and still under threat of community upheaval, or an architectural industry with little to offer the public. As observed by Stephen Graham and Nigel Thrift, it is not always clear what the thing is that requires attention: 'Is it the thing itself, or the negotiated order that surrounds it, or some "larger" entity?'.[70] While FHRAS' coordination of housing repair for everyday people might seem a simple, mundane, or inconsequential task, reading notes from the archive alongside the work of anthropologists and ethnographers hints at something more complex — the underlying work of relational negotiation at the intersection of social and material concerns.

CONCLUSION

What is fixed when a crack is filled, a house re-stumped, a roof leak patched, or a rotting windowsill replaced? Through unpacking the archive of FHRAS, this research has shown that their work not only repaired housing but also remodelled

64. Christopher Henke, 'Negotiating Repair: The Infrastructural Contexts of Practice and Power', in *Repair Work Ethnographies: Revisiting Breakdown Relocating Materiality*, ed. by Alain Bovet, Philippe Sormani, and Ignaz Strebel (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 255–82 (p. 257).

65. Henke, 'Negotiating Repair', p. 263.

66. Bovet and Strebel, 'Job Done', p. 90.

67. Mattern, 'Step by Step'.

68. 'Handyman report: clients urgently requiring assistance of Fitzroy Housing Repair Advisory Service', December 1975, personal archive of FHRAS member.

69. Davis, 'Maintenance and Repair', p. 173.

70. Graham and Thrift, 'Out of Order', p. 4.

architectural practice. As a cooperative collective, disciplinary siloes were dissolved to forge different ways to shape the built environment with others. FHRAS' situated and local practice was attuned to the socio-material assemblage of the suburb and committed to a place. The shopfront made services visible and accessible to the public, while building levels of trust and accountability with residents. FHRAS' work was a relational negotiation formed between conversations and encounters with both the residents and housing of Fitzroy.

If architecture needs to engage in material practices of repair for a plausible future on an inhabitable planet, we need to look to new ways of working to do so. The reality of climate breakdown requires architecture to alter its practices beyond more sustainable material choices and construction methods, to reconsider the discipline more broadly. As asked by Deamer: 'How can we see through the limiting dogmas we have been handed and replace them with new narratives, new organizations, and new methods of production?'[71] While FHRAS' work was particular to a time and place, and the situated nature of this work affords a richness to their legacy, this research has shown that their archive can offer tools and methods of practice that could be re-situated today: cooperative structures and collective work; ongoing engagement with a place and people; having a public presence and assuming accountability; developing local material and political knowledge; sharing skills and knowledge through conversation and media; creating collective resources for public use. While further research and experimentation is needed to understand what forms this might take in the local context of Melbourne today, FHRAS' cooperative, situated and relational work provides some guidelines, prompts and tools to build a more just and shared future.

71. Peggy Deamer, *Architecture and Labor* (Routledge, 2020), p. 3.

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