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You Can Forget About a Housing Recovery With our Skills Drain

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In France, they love their patrimoine, or cultural heritage — at least, that's what they claim. Why, then, are developers being allowed to tear the heart out of historic villages, asks Edward Girardet.

In the past 30 years or so, the French have become increasingly preoccupied with finding the best ways to protect their patrimoine, or cultural heritage. Where there was once a château, there is now a museum; there was once a village, the judge says it is safe to keep it; a group of homeowners might ask the judge to transfer their properties to the local government for the final work.

Wealth must have a home, property developers might say. For example, according to David Yeates, editor of French-property.com, about 400,000 British and Irish people live in France, with 250,000 homes and flats owned by them as primary or secondary residences. Up to 11,000 have settled into the Pays de Gex, with a similar number in Haute-Savoie, according to Chambéry and Annecy’s Ville communale development company. 

The result has been a mutual scramble for rents. The French government has been told that the cost of living in the Pays de Gex is too high, and many families are applying to move out. A local newspaper recently reported that the only way a family could afford to move was to sell their home.

The old town of Gex, where some of the old buildings are protected as patrimoine, has been left to the cookie-cutter designs of modern grand designs, left

In 2017, the Conseil général of Ain, in the old Archives of the department, argued that replacing the old buildings with new ones would be a personal disaster. The old mayor was finally forced to resign in March 2017, a month after he was rejoined. His replacement, the French property developer, was asked to tear down the building.

Journey Through Three Decades of War in the Middle East, the book about the Middle East, has been well received for its critical analysis of the Middle East, and for its coverage of the Middle East.

What's French for Nippon?

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