Putting the Social back into Housing
Learning through Localism?
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Localism: Making Sense of the Contradictions

- Principles of Localism overridden by Localism Act
- Empowerment or Cuts?
- Winners and Losers: Civic Core v deprived localities
- Locally based or Larger Scale TSOs?
- Assets or Liabilities?
- Property or People?
- Big Housing: Taking the Social out of housing
- Community-led housing: Help from within or help from without?
- No State or Enabling State?

Overview of wider evidence on Big Society in Practice

- Continuities with New Labour Third Sector Project & Open Public Services (Alcock 2012)
- Cuts agenda Big Society’s ‘Achilles heel’ (Pattie and Johnston 2011)
- Civic core inverse match with communities of need (Mohan and Bulloch 2012)
- PBR, Primes and Supply Chains dis-empower smaller TSOs in practice of commissioning (Rees, Mullins and Bovaird 2012)
- Social Investment slow – BSC the bank with no borrowers!
- Surviving Below the radar. Big Society an irrelevance: ‘community groups pre-existing, but largely unrecognised, Big Society’ . Little desire to ‘scale-up’ as service providers (McCabe and Phillimore 2012)

Where is Housing’s Big Society?

• Below the radar? Community-led sectors (pre-date localism)
  – Self-help
  – self-build
  – CLTs and development trusts
  – Mutuals, asset transfers and TMOs

• Coming in from the cold after 20 years of marginalisation
  – ‘Community ownership has the potential to empower, rejuvenate and invest in people to deliver projects they care about, retain investment in areas experiencing uplift and create sustained benefits’ (Gooding 2013)
  – Several small Funding Streams for non-registered providers in NAHP 2011-15

• Growth dilemmas: Scaling-up or Going viral?
• Community-led or programme-led
  – In England there are policies for everything! (Francesco Minora)
  – But bureaucratic inertia in shifting programmes away from registered providers

• Facilitation
  – Big state, No State or Enabling State?
  – Specialist intermediaries
  – Big Housing the answer or the problem?

Growing Recognition for the Community-led housing sector

- Legitimacy a key currency in challenging better established/resourced models that have become default option for housing & community investment
- Or returning to root principles (of 60s & 70s generation housing associations)
- Self-help revisited across social policy fields (2000s PATs, 2010s community organisers)
- Coalition building (Mutuals Housing Group, CLT Network, Locality and development trusts)
- Alternative to or Natural Partners for Big Housing in ‘delivering Big Society’?

But who is community-led housing for?

- **Community based projects**
  - Tendency to develop in more affluent areas with social capital?
  - How much cross-over of user groups with Big Housing’s residualised service users?
  - Real alternatives to state-led regeneration (e.g. HMRAs)???

- **Community governance structures**
  - Placating NIMBYs?
  - Local democracy and accountability
  - Fit with city wide governance, resources, power and legitimacy

- **Space for difference or isomorphism?**
  - Rent levels in self-help housing & employment poverty trap?
  - Mixed tenure or home ownership focus in CLTs?

*It's all good stuff, but isn’t it just window dressing and marginal to mainstream housing agendas? – after all the big switch to TSOs has already happened in housing prior to most areas of welfare state and its called stock transfer.*

*Or might community-led models finally transform social housing to become a community-led sector?*
Big Housing: Big Society’s Bedrock?

• Resilient in face of austerity?
  – most asset-rich part of third sector
  – Trading futures on historic assets
  – espoused values fit for the times

• Sought out to fix the leaks
  – Who can Big Society Capital lend to?
  – Key partners for community based budget projects

• New roles with departure of Big Money, Big Regeneration after the Credit Crisis
  – From property based regeneration to community investment
  – Self-interest with welfare benefit threats to trading income stream

• From espoused values to enacted values?
  – Restoring trust and rebuilding civil society connections?

Anti-Social Housing
- Taking the social out of housing

• So what’s social housing for?
  – Low cost housing in high cost locations
  – Security, affordability, cushion from risk & vulnerability
  – Site for social solidarity- Big Society?

• So why would you......
  – Erode product differentiation from PRS
  – Reduce security, increase rents, reduce choice
  – Even question rationale for affordable homes in high cost locations
  – And call this localism????

• Big Housing had choices
  – Social solidarity or new output (insider/outsider dilemma)
  – Compromise for a while, but the deal involved transforming the mainstream
  – Mortgage the future, invest in property assets or social assets?
  – Mission or Mandate?

• Where have these choices left Big Housing’s ability to deliver Big Society?
  – Society exists after all but social solidarity devalued
  – Big Housing part of the solution or part of the problem?

Talking Assets and Liabilities?

- The new language: Asset returns, appreciation, income streams
- Assets talk: part of the recipe for affordable housing programme
  - No pressure to break up non-localist housing organisations
  - Centralise group structures (consolidate the asset)
  - Swap housing in high cost to produce more in low cost areas
- Tensions in practice
  - Decision making on harnessing assets to support new borrowing and building
    - Opportunity cost one off subsidy for new homes v longer term support for and solidarity with communities?
  - Big Housing with asset based logics can be closed to ideas of supporting community based sector
    - Large HAs increasing rents prior to short-life property handbacks and thereby damaging sustainability of self-help organisations
- Community assets or liabilities?
  - Successful housing and land transfers recipe for long term sustainability
  - But Community centres, libraries, parks without revenue funding less clearly assets in this narrow sense
- Maintain it or lose it agenda – choosing community partners
  - Tendency for partnerships within strong civic core
  - Where does this leave poorest places and communities?
Big Housing Goes Local?

• Global Financial Crisis & Austerity
  – Withdrawal by Big Government and Big Money forced new choices on Big Housing: renewed focus on the local
  – Welfare reform and impacts on rental income stream

• Rediscovering local synergies, partnerships, preserving vital infra-structure
  – Local economic impact; spending, commissioning and jobs
  – Welfare benefits and Income maintenance
  – Promoting and trading with local social enterprise (tenant or community-led)
  – Community budgets and shared premises & back office
  – Social Impact Measurement (but usually organisation rather than area partnership focused)
  – Selective asset transfers (but rarely housing assets!)

• More Local Focus but Still Unaccountable? match with Tony Benn’s Three Accountablility Questions
  – Who’s in charge around here?
  – Who appointed them?
  – How can we get rid of them?

• Re-asserting Social Mission when this clashes with Mandate
  – restoring the disappearing campaigning edge?
  – Exploring the role of values and links to governance (Lupton 2013) ‘Profiting from Values’.

Research Agenda

• The role of the scholar:
  – Assembling evidence on new times, Critical Reflection with practice, Feedback to critique and inform policy

• How much real change is there: current & prospective?
  – Change in the fundamentals – social housing & solidarity
  – Change at the margins – small scale community-led change barriers and enablers
  – Potential to transform the mainstream for the common good

• Mapping the new organisational landscape
  – Biggest changes have occurred just as big evaluations became extinct
  – Who are the community-led sector? – what does it stand for? – are there links with co-operative or community governance – what are the links with Localism agenda?
  – What is the social value generated by community-led providers?

• Exploring the connections: actual and potential links between Big Housing & community led sectors
  – Support & knowledge transfer v control and extermination
  – Asset transfers and trading between Big and Community-led sectors
  – Identifying what could be the unifying as well as the competing institutional logics
  – Revisiting Governance – devolution and interface between community governance, big resource allocations & legitimacy – devolving power within Big Housing?

• Making the Case for the Social in Housing
  – Links between service delivery and social justice and (re-)valuing the campaigning roles of community-led and third sector organisations
Promising Directions

• International Gaze
  – Assessing functions of localism through Italian ‘Habitability’ perspective.
  – Exploring potential of community led housing from Austrian co-operative perspective on ‘vertical social capital’ links with the local.
  – Delphi panel linking perceptions and strategies of English HA actors with those facing similar state/market/society tensions in other places.

• Action learning with the sector
  – What knowledge do social housing organisations need to unleash their community investment potential (putting the social back in housing?)

• Theoretical insights
  – Habitability & Theory of the Commons (Minora)
  – Co-operative governance, legitimacy and vertical capital – linking community and urban governance levels (Lang)
  – Hybridity & Social Enterprise finding new synergies between social and commercial drivers (Mullins, Czischke and van Bortel)
  – Principal ownership and re-emphasising community drivers of social housing in relation to state and market drivers (Sacranie)
  – Strategic Action Fields

Taking forward an understanding of change in both community-led housing and ‘Big Housing’ is essential if we are to assess the extent to which ‘Big Society’ and ‘localism’ reconciled with austerity and cuts?
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