

Researching Self-Help Housing: Social Research Goes Live 2

MA Social Research
Introduction to Social Research
November 10th and November 20th 2012
David Mullins

Lecture Structure

- Background
 - Introduction – idea of self-help housing
 - What makes for research impact? -Recap of relevant issues from research texts
 - Researching Self-help housing
 - Achieving Impact
 - 2012 Update – Self-help housing goes live!
 - Reflections on Research Impact
-

Learning Method

- **Iterating Between theory and practice**
- **Thinking about appropriate methods for impact**
- **Reflecting on what has worked and why**
- **Recognising multiple interpretations**
- **Thinking about research/practice as a continuous cycle**

Discussion Points at the end of each learning building block for paired discussions in lecture or individual follow up afterwards

Background

- **Third Sector Research Centre 2008-13**
 - **Policy Related Research**
 - Independence
 - Relevance and impact
 - **Housing scoping work**
 - Huge and varied field
 - From £ multi million housing associations to local tenants groups & community projects
 - **Fast moving agenda**
 - recession, election impacts
-

Why research self-help housing?

- Research gap
 - Outstanding Puzzles
- Fit with policy agenda
 - Potential for change
- Access
 - Prior project contacts
 - Research friendly umbrella organisation
- Values Fit
 - Participative end of housing field



What is Self Help Housing?



What Is Self-Help Housing?

“Self-help housing involves groups of local people bringing back into use empty properties that are in limbo, awaiting decisions about their future use or their redevelopment”

'Five Essential Ingredients'



PROPERTIES



FINANCE



RESIDENTS



PARTNERS



WORKFORCE

The idea of self-help housing

- **Local Action**
 - ‘local people bringing back into use empty properties’
 - Community benefit
 - Member benefit
- **Social enterprise**
 - Employment & training benefits
 - Community use of assets
- **‘Meanwhile Use’**
 - Mutual benefits for owners and users
 - Terms of use should reflect this



Riverlink - tackling dereliction & blight on the North Circular

Self-help housing a brief history

The Concept

- Samuel Smiles (1850s)
 - ‘help from within invariably invigorates’
 - Self-reliance & individual responsibility
- Community self-help
 - Collective responsibility & mutual aid
 - A form of community engagement
 - Complete Autonomy v ‘help from without’, Co-production approaches

The housing context

- Empty Properties & formalisation of squatting
 - IMF 1975 – municipal empties
 - UK & elsewhere
 - Short-life housing 1970s, 80s
 - Some //s to self-build
- Policy Action Team 9 (1999)
 - Self-help & Social enterprise
- Training & Employment projects 2000s
- Coalition cuts & Big Society

1970s, 80s Self-Help Housing's Heyday?



Bonnington Square, London

- 1970's Municipalisation of slum housing
- 1975 IMF Crisis – 'there's no more money'
- Houses acquired by LAs left empty
- Squatting responses
- Community Activism & Co-ops
- Accessible Funding

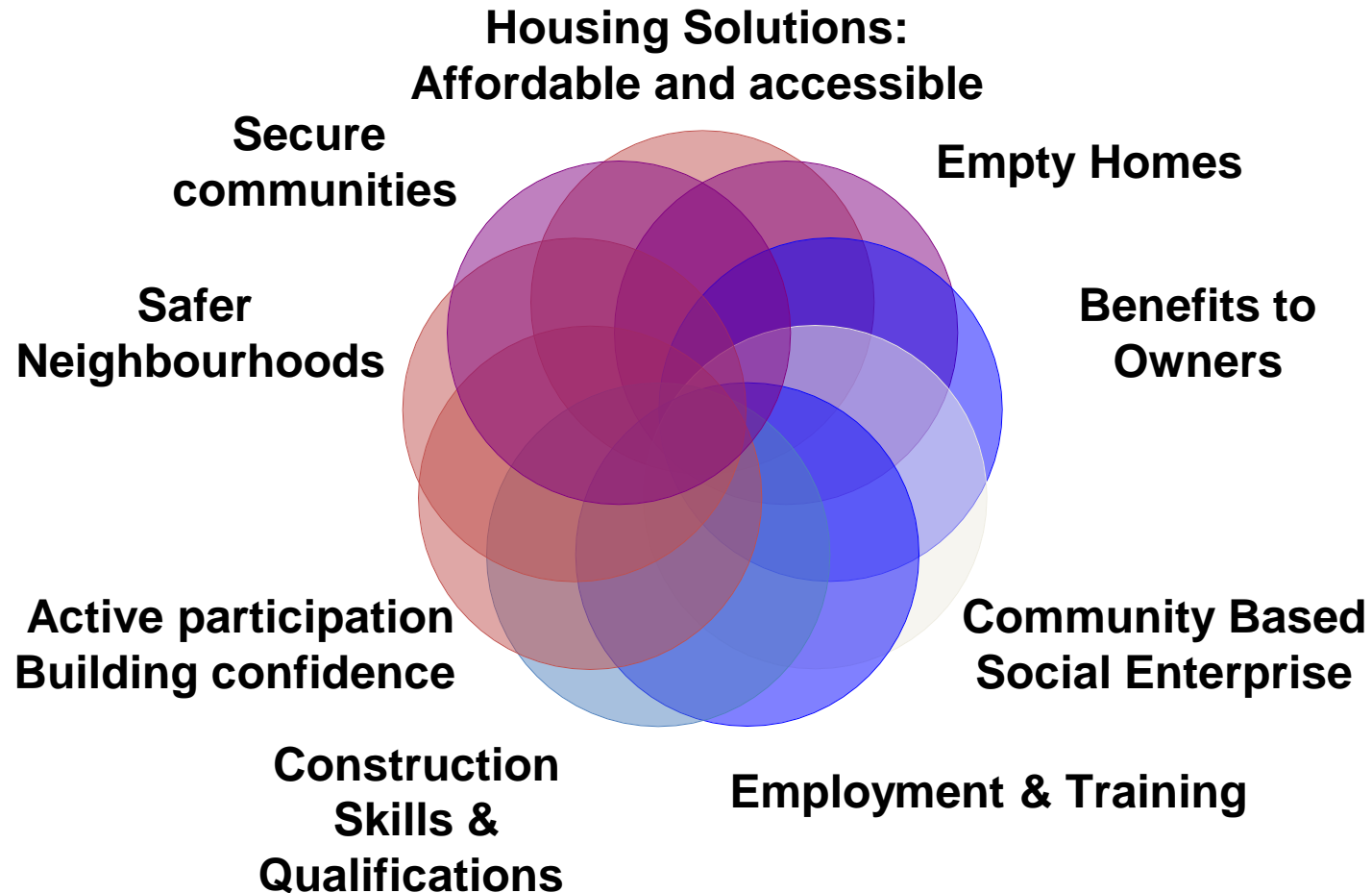
Self-help housing position at start of research in 2008/9

Small and poorly defined field. Declined since 1980s, but new initiatives in employment & training. Just 40 or so organisations known to SHHO left major gaps in national map

Community Housing Projects	(3)	Two in Leeds and one in Plymouth
Housing Co-operatives	(13)	Most short-life co-operatives are in London, others in Brighton, Southsea, Southampton and Norwich – vary considerably in size (from 10 to over 400 homes) and longevity (several London short life co-ops date back to 1970s). Short-life housing is a feature of surprisingly few housing co-operatives today.
Housing and Training Projects	(5)	One in London, remainder in northern England (Yorkshire, North East, Barrow), link construction training with housing mainly for young people.
Refugee Housing Projects	(9)	Most in London, manage private and housing association properties on short life basis – some on quite a large scale (e.g. Tamil Community HA manages 620 short life bedspaces as well as 106 permanent HA units, Westcoast HA in Newham manages 120 short-life homes alongside training for refugees and migrants).
Community Training and Enterprise	(4)	Three in Yorkshire or the NE and one in Bristol, include two development trusts.

Source: <http://self-help-housing.org/self-help-housing-now/directory-existing-projects/> acc. 2 August 2009

Self-help housing relevance to policy today



Self-Help Housing Mansfield Example

- <http://www.channel4.com/programmes/the-great-british-property-scandal/4od>

**Ex-service men do up empty homes acquired
from local authority for £1**

Channel Four Great British Property Scandal

November 7th 2012

DISCUSSION – IN PAIRS

- What sort of issue is self-help housing?
- What types of questions does it raise for you?
- What types of research might be appropriate?
- What conclusions can we draw from its failure to take-off despite several earlier policies promoting it?

What Makes for Research Impact?

Recap some relevant issues from the textbooks

Research for Social Policy

- Linked to current or future policy development
- **To understand or to influence?**
- Reformist tradition – Fabian Society
- Problem framing and definition
- How, why, whether to intervene
- Contradictory and unpredictable outcomes

**Becker and Bryman (2004) Understanding Research
for Social Policy and Practice**

Purposes and Ground Rules

- Policy Research as
 - Sense making; finding out
 - A disciplined way of asking questions
 - Systematic investigation to answer a problem
 - Ground Rules for good research
 - Clear aims
 - Build on existing knowledge & add something new
 - Open-minded and self-reflective
 - Recognise rights of participants
 - Cautious about claims
-

Influence of Research on Policy

- Rational Model – evidence based policy
 - Instrumental and Conceptual links
 - Top down and bottom up relationships
 - **Attribution – single projects – streams of work**
 - Problem Solving Model – policy based evidence
 - Commissioning processes
 - Who defines questions and parameters?
 - Research as alternative to action
 - **Interactive Model**
 - **research & policy mutually influencing**
-

Politics and Policy Research

- Interest Approach
 - Researchers
 - Researched
 - **Dominant Political Structures**
 - Other actors
 - Managing Conflicts
 - **Values**
 - Agendas
 - Purposes
-

Political Climate for Research

- Who is in power?
 - Ideologies of welfare
 - Sets priorities for research questions
 - Determines what counts as evidence
 - **Findings that align count**
 - Justify current policy directions
 - Evidence to develop or change direction
 - Findings that don't fit
 - 'welcomed' but ignored
 - might contribute to longer term reframing
-

Conditions for Positive Impacts

Before & During the Research

- Policy makers & practitioners believe in and value evidence
- Research integrated into policy process
- **Users of Research are partners in process**
- Trust and Authority of Researchers
- **Timeliness and Relevance**

After the Research

- Results fit current ideologies
- Results reported with low degrees of uncertainty
- Skilful advocacy
- **Outputs reach the right people**
- Findings confirm other 'ways of knowing'.

Davies et al 2000, Percy-Smith 2002 (cited by Becker & Bryman)

DISCUSSION IN PAIRS

APPLYING THESE IDEAS ABOUT RESEARCH FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE TO SELF-HELP HOUSING

- What research methods might be feasible?
- What types of relationships should be built with participants and research users?
- How might research interact with policy?

Researching Self-Help Housing

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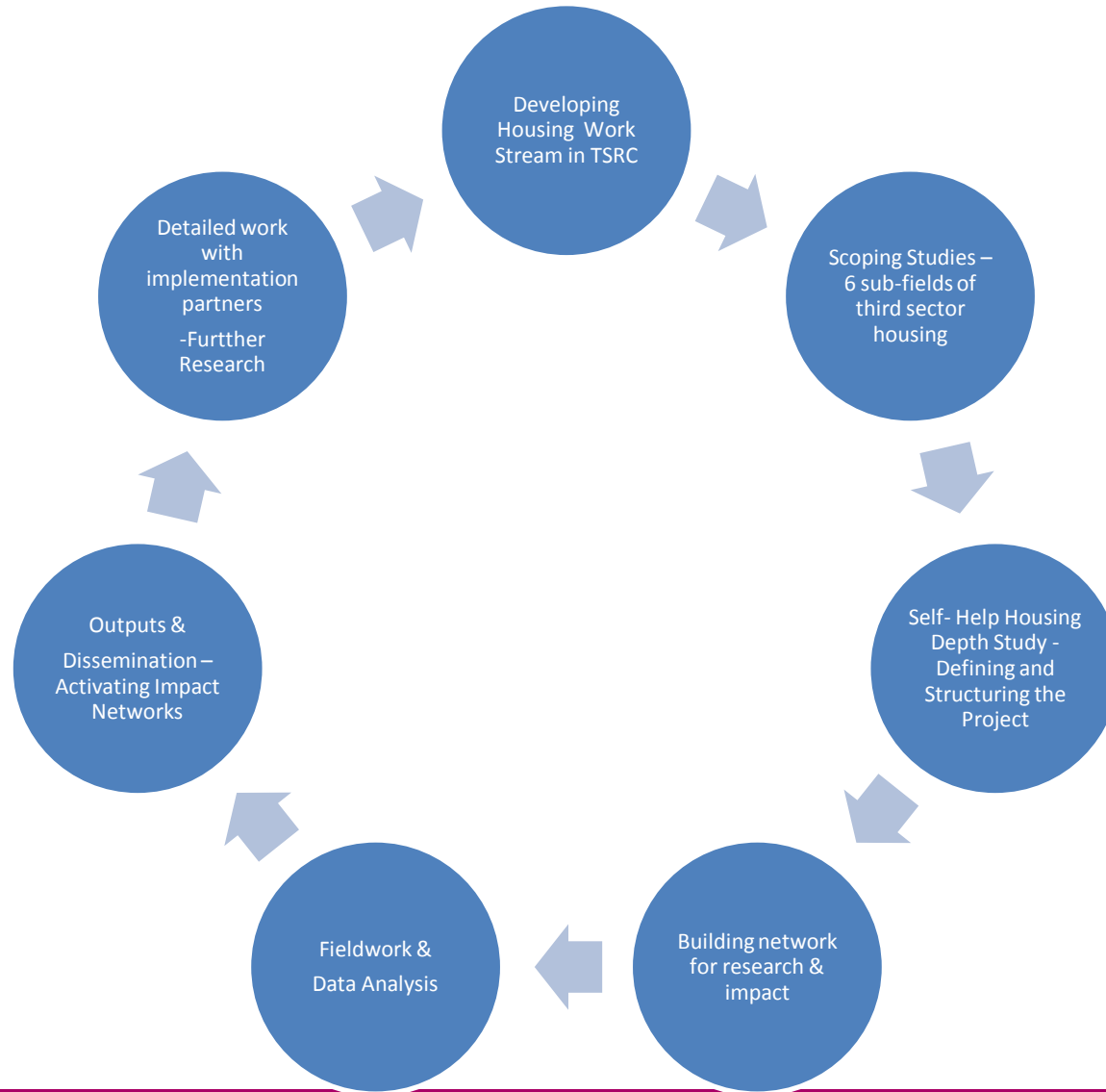


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Research Cycle



Descriptive Research Themes

- the origins and evolution of this sub-sector
- mapping: numbers and types of organisation
- key roles and functions
- third sector characteristics: value added
- policy and regulation issues
- funding sources

Scoping review identified many knowledge gaps and posed 32 further questions

<http://www.tsrc.ac.uk/Research/ServiceDeliverySD/SelfHelpHousing/tabid/615/Default.aspx>

Active Research Questions

Case Studies and Impact Activities led to increasingly active focus for policy/implementation questions

- Self-help housing - could it play a greater role?
 - What are the main benefits to society?
 - What makes self-help projects succeed?
 - Which barriers need to be tackled?
 - What policy changes are needed?
 - What types of funding would make the greatest difference?
 - How could larger housing organisations support self-help housing organisations?
-

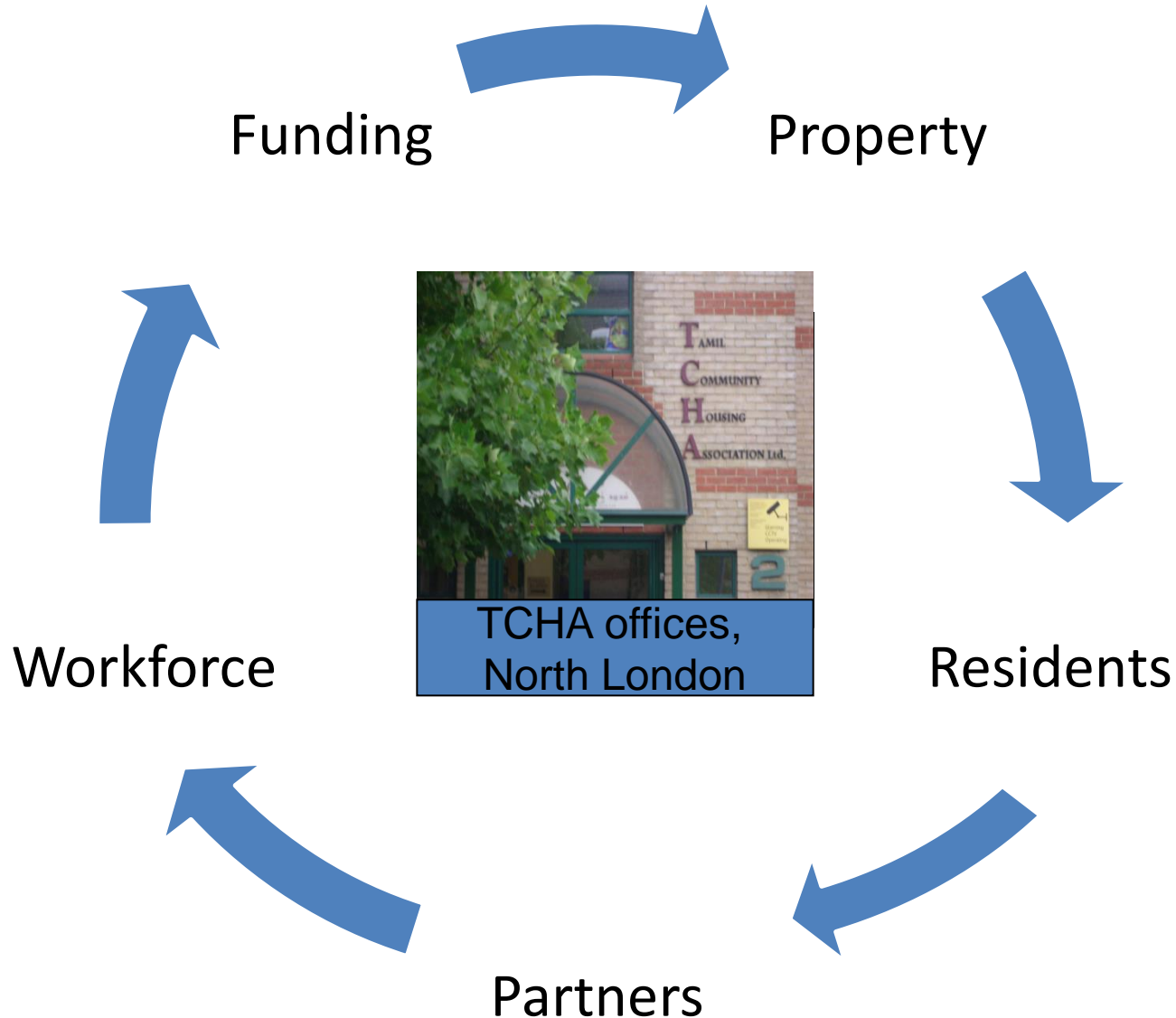
Research methods

- Literature review
 - Scoping interviews with key players
 - Snowballing from self-help housing.org
 - Typology of organisational types
 - Used as sampling frame
 - 8 case studies
 - (5 established groups to identify key features and benefits, 3 new to capture current policy context)
 - 25 interviews with project champions and partner organisations (transcripts & agreed short summaries)
 - Focus groups with workforce & residents
 - Consultation event with 25 experts
-

Research Findings

- Rich qualitative data set
 - Findings organised around themes
 - The Five essentials (for Policy Consultation event - summarised here)
 - Case study profiles
 - Potential to address homelessness (for separate report for CRISIS)
 - Further thematic outputs
 - Resident and workforce engagement
 - Partner relationships ('help from without' theme)
-

Self-help housing: the five essentials



*“Without **property** self-help can’t happen”*

- 784,000 vacant dwellings
 - Most in private sector
 - But limited links with self-help groups
 - Need to identify properties, convince owners,
 - agree terms, overcome uncertainty
 - More success with social landlords but
 - Fewer (in)decent homes now
 - Landlords want to maximise return on assets
 - Fewer lettings outside CBL and nominations
 - Few stable partnerships with self-help groups
 - Need an effective pipeline of handovers to replace hand backs
-

Funding : recognising social impact

- **Variable mix of grants, loans, rents, subsidies, volunteer labour and charitable funds**
 - Costs of refurbishment not easily met from rents
 - Without asset ownership sustainability difficult
 - Small projects find fund raising harder
 - Attitudes of property owners to rate of return crucial
 - **More people can participate if:**
 - Welfare benefits issues addressed – ‘better off in work’
 - Supporting People funds can be accessed
 - **Scope to:**
 - Improve options to harness grants, loans & trading income
 - Recognise multiple social impacts (e.g. through social investment bond for self-help housing)
-

Workforce

- Volunteering
- Employment
& training opportunities
- Qualifications
- Confidence



Grangefield Crew trainee awards,
Community Campus '87

‘we got to work on four flats and it were good, and then we got signed up and that were also good for us. (The) college got (us) enrolled and started straight away’.

Residents

- *“It gives you a bit of time and space just to recover”*
- *“The opportunity to have a say”*
- Affordable rents make it easier to get work
- Variety of forms (members, tenants, routes out of homelessness)
- Not for everyone
 - not acceptable to allocate unimproved properties to priority nominees



Partners

- **‘Help from without’ fundamental to self-help**
 - to secure properties on acceptable terms
 - to secure grants, loans, subsidies to make it work
 - ‘flows of people’ as volunteers and users
 - opportunities to ‘do up’ properties for social landlords
 - technical support from larger housing organisations
 - links with business for pro bono work
 - opportunities for trainees to work alongside private sector construction workers



The Chestnut Centre
A hub for local partnerships



[Home](#)

[What is self help housing?](#)

[How Does Self Help Housing Work?](#)

[Self help housing diagram](#)

[About us](#)

[Self help housing now](#)

[How Much Empty Property Exists?](#)

[Is Self Help Housing A New Idea?](#)

[Directory: Existing projects](#)

[Self Help Housing - How It's Done](#)

[Setting up a Project](#)

[Getting Hold of Property](#)

Key Partners

[Funding Repairs & Project Costs](#)

[Organising Repairs to Properties](#)

[Temporary Social Housing Grant](#)

[Using A Volunteer Workforce](#)

[On-Site Training Opportunities](#)

[Outline Project Proposal](#)

•KEY PARTNERS

- Key role of self-help housing.org
- Source of ideas
- Contacts & links
- Self-help housing.org supported by
- Tudor Trust
- HACT
- Henry Smith Charity

Phase 1 and 2 Outputs (2009-11)

- Scoping Paper – 2 editions!
 - to promote debate and clarify focus for Stage 2 research (TSRC website and active e-mailing)
 - Case Study profiles and summary reports
 - shared and refined with case study organisations for use in further analysis and reports
 - Commissioned report for CRISIS
 - relevance of self-help for homeless people
 - Case Study Briefing for BSHF Consultation
 - Benefits, essentials, barriers, critical success factors
 - TSRC Working Papers 11,53,54
 - BSHF Report and Policy Advice
 - Trade Press and Media coverage : Society Guardian
-

DISCUSSION IN PAIRS

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of focusing the research findings on the 5 essentials of self-help housing?
- Why was so much emphasis placed on agreeing case study profiles with each case study organisation?

Achieving Impact

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Achieving Impact

- Research users as partners in the process
 - Circles of Influence: Linking with a range of actors
 - Self-help housing organisations, policy bodies, partners, intermediaries
 - Engaging with current policy agendas
 - Retreating state
 - Cuts in housing and regeneration
 - Big Society & Localism
 - **Reading small print and policy directions!**
-

Circles of Influence

Core Partners

-TSRC
-Self-help housing.org
-Building and Social Housing Foundation,
-HACT,
-CRISIS



Linking Circles

- Core Partners involved in design of research and dissemination process
 - Research process engaged with self-help groups, champions, users and partners
 - Dissemination process engaged wider circle
 - The Windsor Story - Key Opportunity provided by BSHF Consultation event 8/9 Dec 2010
 - Policy influencing networks on Empty Homes Programme & Community Grants Programme
-

Engaging with Policy Agendas

- Research framed in recession before election
 - //s to 70s and 80s
 - Stalled regeneration schemes
 - Anticipated public spending cuts
 - Growing support for social enterprise & third sector delivery of services
 - Election confirmed relevance but shifted frame of reference
 - Deficit reduction
 - Big Society
 - Localism
-

The Windsor Story



What happened at Windsor?

- Pre-circulation and brief presentation of Case Study Findings report
 - Direct input by four case study organisations on agreed themes (successes and barriers)
 - Other inputs on German experience of self-help housing and CDF research
 - Small mixed groups (from the five circles) meet twice to scope issues and make recommendations (very open non-directed approach)
-

What happened after Windsor?

- Some actors involved in writing policy agenda
 - Some actors lost jobs in Deficit Reduction
 - Close collaboration SHHO, BSHE, TSRC
 - Engaged with Ministers – Legacy argument
 - HCA developed **Empty Homes Programme**
 - 63 community expressions of interest
'encouraged' in over 100 applications
 - **Empty Homes Community Grants Programme (EHCGOP)** 'emerged'
-

What emerged from Consultation?

- Similar views emerged from the 3 groups- All agreed The Time is Right but.....
 - **What are we selling?**
 - Different benefits need to be marketed appropriately to different stakeholders
 - **What does success look like?**
 - Local ingredients, local chefs adapt from broad menu (housing, employment, and wider community benefits)
 - **What are the limits to growth?**
 - Scaling up without selling out – Going viral!
 - Avoiding capture
 - Separate infrastructure support from delivery
-

Impacts of Consultation event

- Direct – letter to Minister and BSHF Report
 - Direct – follow up actions (e.g. to develop funding mechanisms; to facilitate peer visits for new projects to established ones)
 - Indirect – individual attendees use in their day to day work (NHF with housing associations, NAO with ALMOs, Empty Homes with owners etc)
 - Indirect – collective goals sometimes pursued jointly (e.g. knowledge transfer for community housing could be combined with Development Trust Association's existing work)
-

Reading the small print and emerging directions

- The devil is in the detail
 - –expertise needed to convert policy support into workable scheme
 - Some attendees directly involved in shaping and influencing current policies:
 - CSR, criteria to allocate £100m for empty homes
 - Localism Bill & new homes bonus
 - Research & consultation one influence on this
 - **By constructing and working through circles of influence research has greater chance of impact**
-

WHO'S REFLECTING WHO?

SHHOs reflect the shifting agenda!



LATCH Shop front in Leeds

MINISTERS ENDORSE RESEARCH:

Policy Fit = mutual reflection

- *“self-help housing provides a concrete example of many of the policy priorities of the coalition Government including ‘street level regeneration’, building the Big Society, a localist approach to housing, supporting social enterprise and developing training opportunities” (BSHF JAN 2011)*
 - *“the superb work that these housing schemes are already doing shows the scale of what can be achieved when community self-help is combined with cash incentives from the Government...more projects like these will get people into housing, provide valuable employment skills, create better places to live and at the same time give councils extra cash to tackle homelessness and spend on the local community” (GRANT SHAPPS, HOUSING MINISTER, FEB 2011)*
-

2012 Update – Self-help housing goes live!

Arena for Phase 3 Research

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Empty Homes Community Grants Programme (EHCGP)

- Following a bidding process in early 2012
 - 95 community-led groups will receive £29.7 million to bring into use around 5,600 homes 2012-15
 - Two-thirds of these were not in the data base of self-help housing organisations in the 2009 research
 - Many are wider social enterprises or partnerships (e.g. Between Jericho and Springfield project in Birmingham and Windrush Alliance in Nottingham who were at a Regional Facilitation event held by Self-Help Housing.Org in Birmingham on November 6 2012
-

Regional Workshops for organisations with EHCGP funding



Steve Hoey, Co-ordinator of Canopy Housing, Leeds shares learning with new projects, Birmingham November 6th 2012

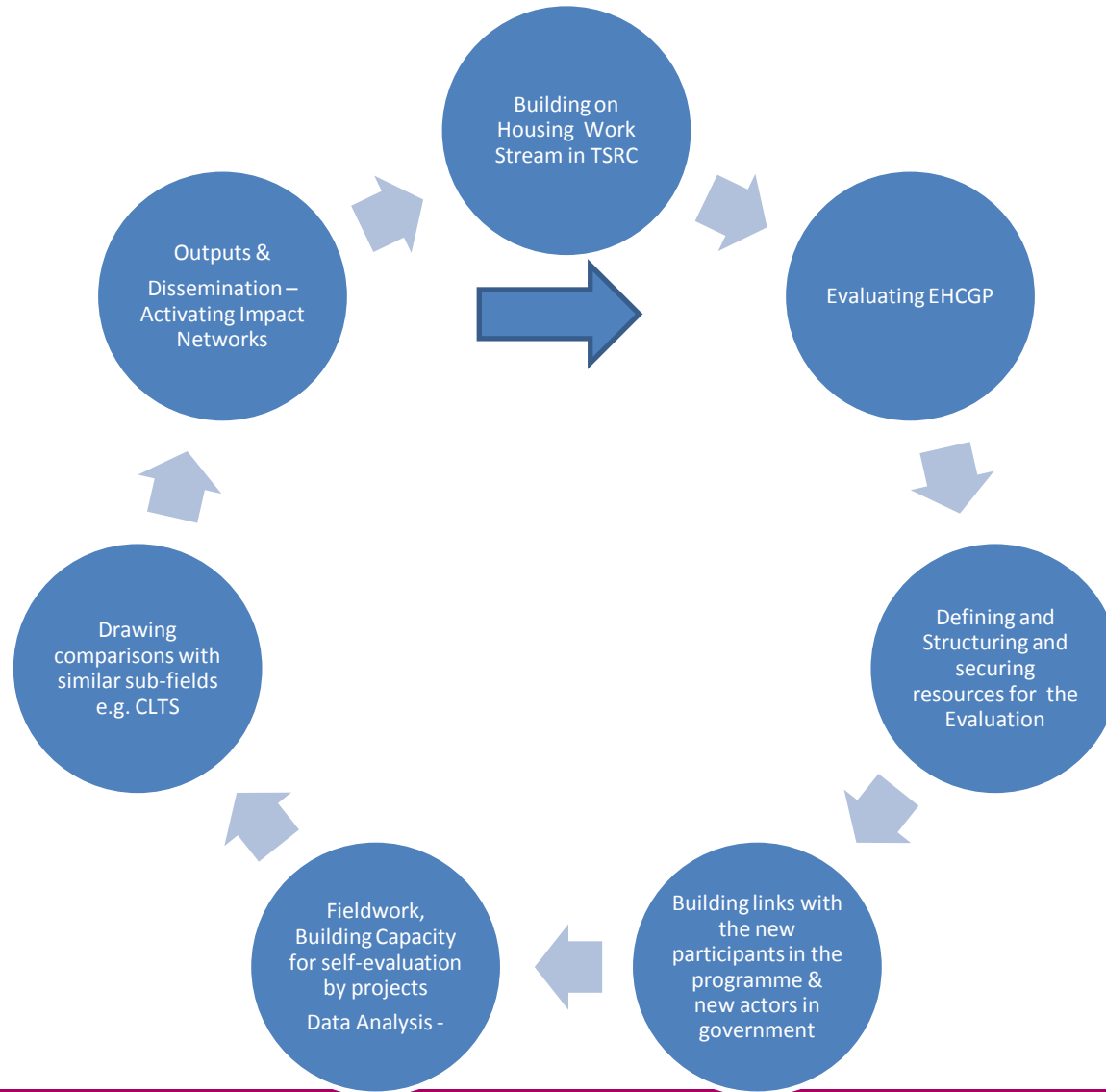
Why was Empty Homes Community Grants Programme Important?

- Ring-fenced £30 million of £100 million Empty Homes Programme for community-led groups
 - Did not have to be registered providers
 - Bids did not compete with registered providers
 - Many new groups were encouraged to bid
 - 120 bids, 95 successful
 - Doubles number of groups active at start of research! – **New Dilemmas of Growth.**
-

Scaling up or Going Viral?

- Harnessing external resources and skills while maintaining local scale, accountability and community leadership
- **Loose network approach vs. formalised network**
 - Risk of formalised partnerships with technical experts (e.g. HAs) risk of moving decision-making away from local communities.
 - **CLT sector** shows the importance of ‘help from without’ and umbrellas to support self-help.
 - **Self-help housing sector** prefers viral expansion. Preservation of local control, scale and DIY ethos

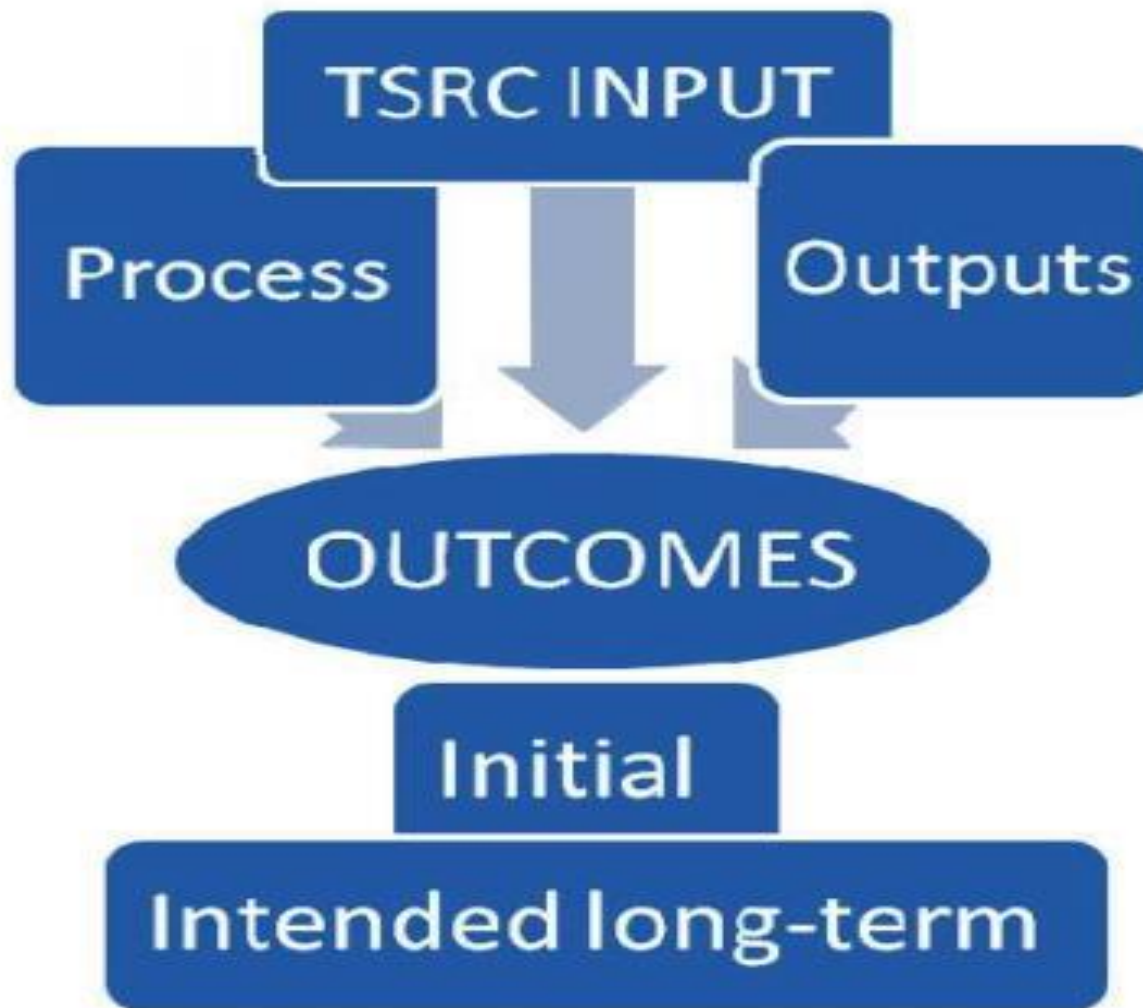
Research Cycle- The Next Wave!



Third Wave of Research 2012-13

- How has EHCGP changed the map of self-help housing?
 - What challenges have new providers faced?
 - How can further expansion best be supported?
 - What can be learned from other sectors – comparison with Community Land Trusts
 - How can SHHOs demonstrate their multiple outcomes
-

Reflections on Research Impact



Perceptions of Impact

Jon Fitzmaurice tells the research story from the perspective of Self-help housing.org (November 6th 2012)



Types of Impact : TSRC

- Conceptual impact - informs thinking (e.g. **‘meanwhile use’**)
 - Instrumental impact -informs action in policy and practice (**Empty Homes Programme**)
 - Capacity building impacts - develops skills (**self-reporting on social value**)
 - Process impacts -impact as part of the research process (**built ownership through ‘policy circles’ -BSHF Windsor Workshop**)
-

Explaining Policy Impact: Policy Fit

- **The Garbage Can:** solutions provided by self-help matched to multiple public problems and dominant political discourse of Big Society
- **Policy Streams:** connections made between problem, policy and political streams at and after Windsor consultation event
- **Policy Games :** detailed attention to Empty Homes Programme policy game: which actors? What rules? What share to community sector?

Mullins, D Jones, P.A. and Teasdale, S. (2011) Self-Help Housing if not now when?
ENHR Conference Toulouse July 2011

ProblematISING Policy Fit

- If self-help fitted Labour PAT agenda why did it not grow in the 2000s?
 - Crowding out hypothesis
 - Dominance of large scale and cross subsidy model
 - Self-help no longer had a place
 - Complementary role not really explored
 - Pipeline of 'meanwhile use'
 - Antagonistic relations between asset management, property development interests of HAs and community use perspective of SHHOs
-

Long term impact

- help self-help housing to become a more recognised and sustainable solution
 - increase awareness of self-help housing and it's contribution to social value
 - make it a more accepted part of initiatives to bring empty properties into use
 - increase understanding of the concept of 'meanwhile use'
 - enable a stronger network of self-help housing groups to take up these opportunities.
-

Reflections (1) Policy relevance

- Linking to the policy agenda
 - Pragmatism or capture?
 - Is the research still likely to be ‘welcomed but ignored’?
 - Impact dependent on wider context
 - Massive spending reductions and loss of institutional capacity in many enabling bodies not a favourable climate for self-help
 - Help from within dependent on help from without
-

Reflections (2) Dissemination

Routes & timescales

- Streams of projects v single research outputs
 - Multiple branding – TSRC, BSHF, CRISIS
 - Influence on work of other researchers –CDF-TSRC
 - How might a variety of routes increase the impact?
 - Short term- longer term impacts
 - Consultation opportunities very short term
 - Knowledge transfer and peer learning networks medium term
 - Funding mechanisms longer term
-

Reflections (3) Specific impact lessons from Consultation

- Missing influencers (key to follow up but not directly engaged)
 - Private property owners
 - Social investors
 - Multiple options
 - Channel funding through HAs or direct to SHHOs
 - Simple messages
 - Do private property owners need to know about benefits for users or just benefits for them?
-

Reflections (4) Impact v research quality

- Does emphasis on impact weaken other aspects & overall quality of research?
 - Could we have taken a more 'objective' approach to studying self-help housing?
 - Was the refinement of early broad research questions towards more action based questions a good thing?
 - Can research be designed to fit a variety of interests without becoming more closely associated with some of them than others?
-

Recap: Conditions for Positive Impacts

Before & During the Research

- Policy makers & practitioners believe in and value evidence
- Research integrated into policy process
- **Users of Research are partners in process**
- Trust and Authority of Researchers
- **Timeliness and Relevance**

After the Research

- Results fit current ideologies
- Results reported with low degrees of uncertainty
- **Skilful advocacy**
- **Outputs reach the right people**
- Findings confirm other 'ways of knowing'.

Davies et al 2000, Percy-Smith 2002 (cited by Becker & Bryman)



DISCUSSION IN PAIRS

Each pair to consider reflections on one of following four topics **and** final question (5):

- 1) Policy Relevance
 - 2) Dissemination Routes and Timescales
 - 3) Achieving Specific Impacts
 - 4) Impact v Research Quality
 - 5) **To what extent does the project meet Becker and Bryman's Conditions for Positive Impacts?**
-

Further Information

David Mullins

Third Sector Research Centre

d.w.mullins@bham.ac.uk

**[http://www.tsrc.ac.uk/Impact
/Selfhelphousing/tabid/88
5/Default.aspx](http://www.tsrc.ac.uk/Impact/Selfhelphousing/tabid/885/Default.aspx)**

