Briefing Paper 18

Housing Scoping Paper: Tenants and residents associations and community-based organisations

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Introduction

This paper is one of six scoping papers prepared for the housing work stream on the Third Sector Research Centre. At neighbourhood level this sub-sector, comprising tenants and residents associations (TRAs) and community-based organisations, forms the backbone of volunteer work that underpins the third sector; enables models of management and control; functions as a 'critical friend' to the housing association sector and often acts as the springboard for locally inspired social enterprise. The credit crisis and ensuing recession have made clear the importance of harnessing these locally based sectors to create alternative employment pathways and sustain flagging housing and regeneration programmes[1].

Where past strategies have sometimes been uncoordinated and piecemeal, there is now the opportunity to realise the government's empowerment and localism agenda *in practice* by actively involving communities in planning and decision-making via their local organisations to bring a cohesive and sustainable approach to neighbourhood investment in the future.

The parallel histories of the tenants movement and the community movement emerge from very different ideologies that have converged over community-wide concerns so that both currently promote social, economic and environmental well-being. There is scope for both sets of organisations to play a key role in local partnerships and in the new localism agenda. Key differences can be summarised as follows. TRAs are defined by the Tenants Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) as local groups, formed to identify and try to solve problems, which often become representative of tenants' views in an area **www.tpas.org.uk**. These tenant-led organisations have evolved

from a long history of struggle over housing rights and retain a campaigning tradition alongside their role in regulatory frameworks. Community-based organisations developed out of a movement of philanthropic activism to foster social mix, alleviate poor living conditions and promote individual self-betterment. A newly created Home Office partnership, 'Community Alliance' **www.comm-alliance.org** has been set up to support 'community anchor organisations' described by Thake (2001)[2] as a cluster of organisations with shared outlook that build social cohesion from the bottom up.

The valuable contribution and impact that these organisations conjointly make depends on effective network co-ordination to overcome structural barriers and maximise engagement and participation.

Origins and evolution

The growth of the tenants movement was characterised by widespread struggles over high rents and rates continuing from urban industrialisation to the First World War. At the same time churches, mutual aid and friendly societies and early social work organisations created an organisational focus for community development, adult education and social welfare opportunities. *Historical linkages were forged between these movements by contextual factors such as the arrival of municipal housing under the Addison Act 1919. Despite high expectations, tenants were often disappointed by the lack of facilities on the new estates*[3].

Hague[4] has explained the conjunction of factors that led to changes in TRAs between 1968 and 1974. High levels of confidence and campaigning activity together with a growing culture of community participation coincided with a poor quality built environment, failed building experimentation and national economic crisis, to promote a critical juncture in relations

between council tenant and landlord. What followed marked the start of the potential for negotiation and involvement from within establishment structures, where previous relations had been largely confrontational. A new English regulator for social housing, the Tenant Services Authority **www.tenantservicesauthority.org** and the National Tenant Voice **nationaltenantvoice@communities.gsi.gov.uk** are recent initiatives to develop tenant-led involvement in monitoring and regulation. Still, UK housing is usually seen as separate from other aspects of community development and regeneration.

Community-based organisations have been working for many years to provide solutions to local issues, such as transport, training, youth services, workspace units, community centres, open spaces, business start-ups etc. yet the suppl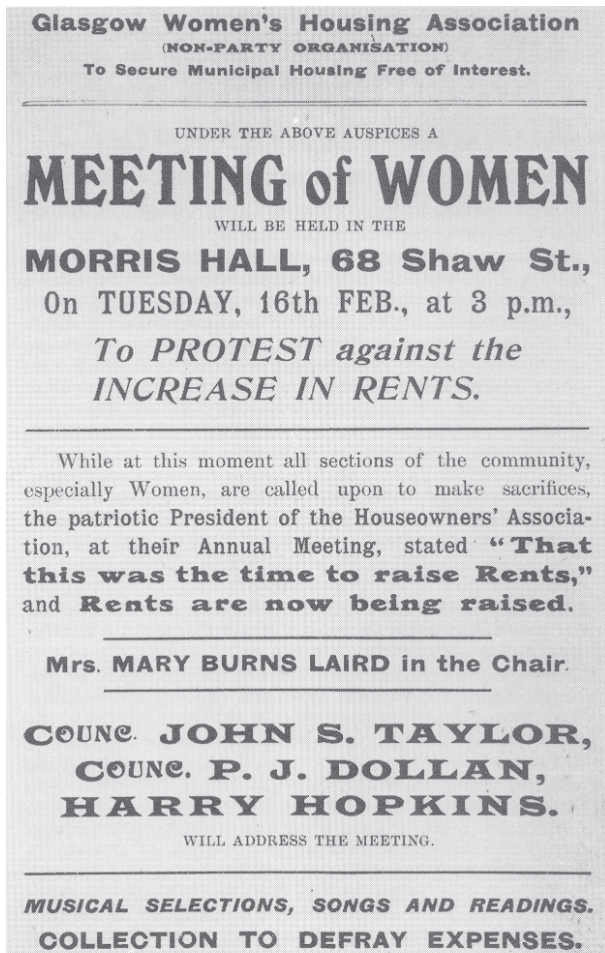y of affordable housing has had a *relatively low profile within the movement.* However as the Development Trusts Association observes, good quality affordable housing is fundamental to achieving viable confident communities. **www.dta.org.uk**

Main types of organisations

It is impossible to be certain how many tenant and community organisations there are active in the UK. Most social landlords encourage recognised and constituted TRAs that fulfil the role of 'critical friend' in helping to improve service delivery and housing standards. These organisations are often clustered under regional, and in some cases, national tenant and resident-led federations that mirror the representative and accountability structures of local member organisations. Sometimes community-based organisations are similarly affiliated although they do not generally take part in landlord governance structures. However, management and ownership via

Table 1: Types, numbers, spread and roles

Type	Numbers	Spread	Role
Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs)	1000s	Throughout the UK, mostly recognised and funded by social landlord bodies	Generally, campaigning, representation, recognised and constituted role in monitoring and wider community agenda. Data bases suggest most are affiliated to umbrella federations of TRAs.
Tenants and Residents Federations	100s	Throughout the UK, usually city or borough-wide (county-wide in rural areas)	Can take instrumental or ideological stance[5]. Often vehicles for training, recognition of TRAs and grant funding.
Federation of Private Residents Associations	Over 500 RAs including Right to Manage Companies	England-wide	Lobbying around leaseholders issues and green agenda. Campaigns include fuel poverty and credit crunch and service charges.
Tenants and Residents Organisations in England (TAROE)[6] Est: 1997	Total membership: 238 includes 32 Federations, and 113 TRAs	England-wide	TAROE aims to secure equal rights for all tenants. To improve the quality, accessibility and affordability of social housing, and to improve and protect the quality of life, social and environmental conditions for everyone in their local communities.
Welsh Tenants Federation	312 affiliates	Wales-wide	Established in 1988 - rights-based 'bottom up' role promoting collective participation and collaboration.
Scottish Regional Tenants Networks	10 regionally	Scotland-wide c.f. English and Welsh Federations	Encouraged by Tenants Involvement in the Islands Grampian, Highlands Rural Areas (TIGHRA)[7] (supporting rural areas) now merged with TPAS Scotland.
The Tenants Information Service 1989	200 TAs and landlords approx	Scotland-wide EC comprises 20 tenants	Information, advice and training and generally support efforts of the tenants' movement.
National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations (NFTMO)	Founded 1992 with over 100 affiliates	English region-wide	Represents management co-ops, estate management boards and other forms of tenant management organisations.
TPAS	Landlord and tenant bodies	Separate organisations with main offices in England, Scotland and Wales	Training and information sharing.
Community associations and groups	400,000[8]	Throughout the UK	Generally project or issue focus at neighbourhood level. Sometimes affiliated to TRA Federation or Community Network.
Community anchor organisations (CAOs)	626 new and emerging a/c membership survey 2009	Throughout the English regions	Each CAO creating a cluster of community organisations at local level to promote social cohesion.
Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs)	202 (last reliable count 2002)	Across 53 local authority areas (66% metropolitan authorities in London)[9]	Devolved management of social housing stock covering 84,000 properties in all.
Asset transfer organisations	Case studies only		

Glasgow Women's Housing Association
(NON-PARTY ORGANISATION)
To Secure Municipal Housing Free of Interest.

UNDER THE ABOVE AUSPICES A

MEETING of WOMEN

WILL BE HELD IN THE

MORRIS HALL, 68 Shaw St.,

On TUESDAY, 16th FEB., at 3 p.m.,

*To PROTEST against the
INCREASE IN RENTS.*

While at this moment all sections of the community, especially Women, are called upon to make sacrifices, the patriotic President of the Houseowners' Association, at their Annual Meeting, stated **"That this was the time to raise Rents,"** and **Rents are now being raised.**

Mrs. MARY BURNS LAIRD in the Chair.

COUNC. **JOHN S. TAYLOR,**
COUNC. **P. J. DOLLAN,**
HARRY HOPKINS.

WILL ADDRESS THE MEETING.

MUSICAL SELECTIONS, SONGS AND READINGS.
COLLECTION TO DEFRAY EXPENSES.

transfer of stock and land has been an option available to TRAs and community-based organisations since 1974, more recently promoted by the Quirk Review on asset transfer[10].

Representative/umbrella bodies

As the poster illustrates the role of women within the tenants movement was notable from its early origins[11]. TRAs, in particular, are keen to represent all sections of their communities as their credibility in partnership and regulation depends upon it (Table 1). They are supported by the TPAS **www.tpas.org.uk** with separate organisations in Scotland, Wales and England that share similar aims; to extend the reach and quality of tenant influence. A newly created Home Office partnership, 'Community Alliance' **www.comm-alliance.org** has been set up to support 'community anchor organisations'.

Key roles and functions

Case studies denote some of the core functions (Table 1) that TRAs and community-based organisations perform:

1. The role of 'critical friend'

Slough Federation of Tenants and Residents was formed in 1999, made up of two delegates from each of the ten TRAs supported by Slough Borough Council. They are an independent, campaigning organisation known as the 'FED' that seek to promote the interests of all Slough tenants and residents dealing with issues that affect the whole community. The FED meets regularly with the Council to help influence decisions, share information, raise any concerns and monitor progress in housing services. Since the Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) was set up in 2006, the 'FED' has worked closely with the new organisation to re-establish their role in consultation and as 'critical friend'.

2. Working in partnership to inform policy and regulation

In the late 70s/early 80s local authorities in Wales encouraged and supported groups to consult on services. Later cross boundary federations were formed, taking a conciliatory approach to landlord/tenant relations. In 1987 a working party organised by Shelter Cymru brought federations together to found a national organisation. The Welsh Tenants Federation (WTF) was formed in 1988 as a result. **www.welshtenantsfed.org.uk** WTF are very proud of their 'bottom-up approach' and wield influence at Assembly level. They are involved in regulation via an Advisory Board and a Tenant Advisory Panel, which adopts a more collaborative structure.

3. Increasing representation and improving communication

TARCA (Town and Rural Communities Association) is an independent umbrella organisation for residents and tenants in North Shropshire, including the market towns of Wem, Market Drayton, Whitchurch and Ellesmere and was established when North Shropshire tenants voted to transfer council housing to Meres and Mosses Housing Association, now part of Shropshire Housing Group. The Committee is potentially made up of three representatives from each town together with village voices from the surrounding rural areas. To increase local representation and involvement, TARCA held fund days and stalls in each town and rotated its committee meetings between different parts of the district.

4. Influencing community-wide decision-making

Kirklees Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations is the umbrella organisation for all the Tenants and Residents Associations in the Kirklees area **www.kftra.net**. Since the Federation was formed in 1987 it has been supporting and developing the tenant movement in Kirklees. The Federation's main aim is to ensure that tenants & residents, living on local council estates are able to have a voice in the

decision-making process on issues not just concerning their housing but also their environment and their communities.

5. Taking control of solution to local problem

The regeneration of the former council housing estate at Perry Common was initiated following the emergence of significant structural defects in the concrete 'Boot Houses'. Birmingham City Council was left with a significant problem: the houses needed to be demolished and new housing built so a new and innovative solution needed to be found. That solution was Witton Lodge Community Association. In order to facilitate the regeneration of the estate, the Council gifted the cleared land to the Association who went on to sell a third of the land to housing associations, a third to private developers and, using the profits from the sale of the land, built 167 properties (including a forty apartment extra-care scheme) of its own on the remaining land, thereby creating an estate of mixed housing tenure. The local Community Centre, recently transferred on a 99-year lease will be transformed into a tool for social and economic regeneration for people from across the constituency[12]
www.wittonlodge.org.uk

Key issues for further research

Further research might incorporate a network systems approach[13] to integrate community empowerment, autonomy, democracy and regulation objectives. This could also include the contribution of women, an under-researched area of community participation.

Issues relevant to the TSRC are:

- the contribution made by both movements to the localism agenda including models of asset management, transfer and enterprise initiative;
- the challenge for TRAs in retaining autonomy during collective participation in both regulation and local decision-making, to ensure that the role of 'critical friend' underpins sustainable future planning, development and regeneration;

- the need to preserve grassroots social and economic regeneration that provides confidence and skill building pathways to employment in a policy climate that focuses on tackling worklessness.

Endnotes

1. Parkinson, M. & Ball, M. (Jan, 2009) The credit crunch and regeneration: impact and implications. An independent report to the Dept for Communities and Local Government.
2. Thake, S. (17-18 September, 2007) Community Anchor Organisations. Development Trusts. .Association Conference, Oxford Town Hall
3. Grayson, J. & Walker, M. (eds) (1996) Opening the Window: Revealing the HiddenHistory of Tenants Organisations. TPAS and Northern College.
4. Hague, C. (1990) The development and politics of tenant participation in British council housing. Housing Studies, 5:4, pp 242-256.
5. Dalziel, R. Tenants and Residents Associations and Council Collaboration: Rhetoric And Reality. PhD March 2009.
6. TAROE along with NFTMO and the Confederation of Co-operative Housing are the three leading nationally recognized tenants organizations involved in the National Tenant Voice.
7. TIGHRA closed 15th June 2009.
8. Thake estimate 2007.
9. Rowlands (2008) Forging Mutual Futures - Co-operative, Mutual and Community Based Housing in Practice. History and Potential p.28.
10. Quirk, B. (May, 2007) Making Assets Work: The Quirk Review of Community Management and ownership of public assets. Queens copyright.
11. Melling, J. (1983:63) handbill of GWHA, entitled, 'Meeting of Women, for 16.2.1915 at 3pm'. Library of Patrick Dollan: Glasgow, in possession of L. Rosenberg.
12. Spence, K., and Thompson. A. 2009, *Perry Common's Natural World: A Business Plan in Support of Birmingham City Council's Access to nature Bid.* Birmingham City Council/Witton Lodge Community Association.
13. see for example Mullins, D and Jones, P.A. (2009) Refugee integration and access to housing: a network management perspective. Journal of Housing and the Built Environment:Volume 24, Issue2 (2009), Page 103.