

Newsletter



No 9 - Autumn 2017

Editorial



David Mullins

The last three months has been dominated by the Grenfell Fire tragedy and its aftermath which has led everyone with an interest in social housing to revisit their basic beliefs and assumptions. The fire came a few days before the International Festival of Social Housing in Amsterdam where it was great to hear the enthusiasm of speakers from Taiwan, where social housing is a new social movement addressing the need for decent, affordable and secure homes.

There were also more critical stances responding to recent change in social housing in countries like the Netherlands and the UK which seemed to have been moving away from these fundamental purposes.

The post-Grenfell debate has provided welcome recognition of the links between housing and social inequality, of the massive reductions in state expenditure on building and maintaining social rented homes and the extent of de-regulation affecting the most basic health and safety protections. For once many journalists have been out listening to tenants and trying to get to grips with the little known changes that have affected social housing finance, the ways in which estate modernisation programmes are procured and financed and the reasons for the growing private influence over public purposes.

We have previously described these changes as 'state-led hybridisation' where social purposes are cross-subsidised by commercial activities, more and more key decisions about social welfare protection are subject to commercial rationality, yet the state maintains a high degree of influence for example to impose welfare conditions on service users¹. However, as our paper at the International Festival argued² there are also more progressive alternative forms of hybridity which could make for a 'good society'. Providing housing for a wider range of income groups need not be at the expense of social rent but could be in addition to it. Much needed regeneration of social housing estates need not lead to displacement, gentrification and rent hikes but could build more inclusive communities with more social rented homes and community facilities.

< Cover image: GRENFELL
CONDOLENCE WALL.

In our view the key missing ingredient of recent hybridisation of social housing has been the loss of community and tenant influence.

As all students of our Housing and Communities module know, a balanced form of hybridity must involve influence for tenants and communities alongside the state and the market. There are beacons of good practice in this regard as recent Confederation of Cooperative Housing research on Mutuality in Governance³ and our own work for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on tenant involvement in governance⁴ testify. However, compared to earlier times (see Jon Stevens' article later in this issue) these models now appear to be marginal to a large-scale housing sector where most of the accountabilities are upwards and

outwards rather than back to the tenants and communities through 'citizen power'.

An important question for the future is how much attention the Grenfell Enquiry and recently announced Government Review of Social Housing will give to citizen power and successful models of community accountability and influence. Now is a once in a generation opportunity to restore the balance requiring government, local authorities and housing providers to return to the underlying social purposes of good quality, secure and affordable homes for those who need them now being discovered in Taiwan. The last White Paper on Housing was entitled 'fixing a broken housing market'; the next one should focus in 'restoring citizen power to social housing'.

Welcome to our autumn 2017 newsletter with the usual mix of news, features and events for your calendar. We look forward to meeting with you during the year at one of these events.

¹ See Mullins, Milligan and Nieboer (2017) *State Directed Hybridity? The Relationship between Non-Profit Housing Organisations and the State in Three National Contexts*. *Housing Studies*. [Published on line](#)

² Gregory, Mullins, Redman and Murie (2016) *Housing and the Good Society*. [Read more](#)

³ Bliss N (2017) *Mutuality and accountability in the housing association sector*. *Report of the Mutual Governance: Mutual Outcomes project*. Confederation of Cooperative Housing.

⁴ Mullins, Shanks and Sacranie (2017) *Tenant Involvement in Governance*. *Northern Ireland Housing Executive*. [Read more](#)

CONTENTS

Editorial	2
News: Degrees, Jobs and Awards	3
Projects Completed	4
International Visitors	5
Honorary Fellows & PhD candidates	7
Feature	8
Conferences	11
Publications	12
Events	13

Degrees and Jobs

Housing and Communities Graduates excel



David Mullins

Two Housing and Communities students: **Maddy Bunker** and **Verity Sayers** were celebrating First Class Degrees at the Social Policy Degree Congregation in July. Verity Sayers crowned her achievement by immediately taking up a post in Private Sector Housing with Kettering

Council. Congratulations also to **Natika Hamilton** who graduated with a 2.2 at the same ceremony.

We look forward to further success at the December congregation when **Alex Robinson** and **Reelika Riepul** receive their degrees.

Verity Sayers First Class BA Social Policy and Kettering Housing Solutions Tea member commented:

“Studying the Housing and Communities Pathway has provided me with many opportunities, including a placement within Birmingham City Council’s Housing Team and the opportunity to write my dissertation on the contemporary problems in student housing. These experiences have helped me to attain a 1st Class grade and have also allowed me to begin my career in Housing Solutions within a local authority.”



College Impact Award



Halima Sacranie

I was delighted to receive a commendation in the College of Social Sciences Outstanding Impact Prizes 2017, which “have been introduced to acknowledge and celebrate the excellent impact activity being undertaken throughout the College.”

As runner up for the **Outstanding Early Career Impact Prize**, I was recognised for my involvement in the Empty Homes Community Grants Programme Research Legacy Impact Project.

This important project (which has featured regularly in our group newsletters over the past few years) has been about recognising, promoting and enabling local communities to bring empty properties back into use to meet housing need and also to improve neighbourhoods. This acceleration project has tracked the impact of the research in making the case for the £50 million government Empty Homes Community Grants (EHCGP) programme.

It has also explored the impact of the programme in terms of housing and wider social impacts, and finally mapped future scenarios and the legacy options to sustain impact through local authority partnerships and asset based development strategies.

Since completing my PhD at the University of Birmingham in 2011, I have worked on a number of projects as part of the Housing and Communities Research Group, with the longest and most impactful being the Empty Homes Community Grants Programme Evaluation and follow on Impact Acceleration projects. Part of my research role for the Empty Homes Impact Project was to help design, administer and

evaluate an **online survey**. Of the 110 community groups which participated in the government’s EHCGP programme, 52 completed our survey, which provided invaluable data on stakeholder impact.

In my teaching role at the University of Birmingham, it was also great to be able to incorporate findings from this research project as a lecture and case study in our Year 2 BA Social Policy module on Housing and Communities (PDF) with policy analysis and implementation examples.

Another great outcome of this research work has been our research group gaining another Honorary Research Fellow, Jon Fitzmaurice from Self-help-housing.org, who has been a key collaborator on Empty Homes project, and continues to make the convincing case for refurbishing empty properties to increase affordable housing provision and for wider positive social, environmental and economic impacts.

Projects Completed

West Midlands project on Social Lettings Agencies

Published with West Midlands Housing Officers Group



David Mullins

The Housing and Communities Research Group has now completed its project with the West Midlands Housing Officer Group on Social Lettings Agencies (SLAs) in the West Midlands, building on earlier work for Birmingham City Council.

SLAs are becoming an important route into the private rented sector for groups who might previously have accessed social housing. Over the past year we have been working with the West Midlands Chief Housing Officers Group and Birmingham City Council who in 2014 established *Let to Birmingham* in partnership with Omega Lettings (now part of the Mears Group). We have:

- developed a typology of SLAs drawing on a scoping study and literature review
- undertaken a depth study of Let to Birmingham scope to learn about the experience of tenants and landlords.
- supported peer learning among West Midlands authorities through three networking events in Telford, Birmingham and Stafford
- produced a series of research reports with recommendations for future policy and practice
- held a Regional Research Presentation at which stakeholders responded to our policy recommendations

Find here the [project report](#).

Final report on Tenant Engagement in Governance

The Housing Executive commissioned the University of Birmingham to review approaches to tenant involvement in the governance of social housing organisations in Northern Ireland and explore the relevance of international models and practices for the region.

The research involved interviews, an evidence review, case studies, and a number of consultation workshops, and this comprehensive final report details the findings of each stage of the project.

This project is now attracting international interest.

Presentations are booked with the Flemish Tenant Union Conference in Antwerp in October and the European Federation for Living, a partnership of large European social housing providers and universities in Ghent in November.

HCRG contributes to the all party parliamentary group for healthy homes and buildings

HCRG Emeritus and Honorary staff Alan Murie, Chris Watson and Jon Stevens are members of the Academic-Practitioner Partnership which, in July 2016, published the paper **Good housing better health**.

This argues for a more comprehensive, 'total stock' approach to housing policy. It puts forward an action plan to get housing quality back on the policy agenda; and calls for a wider recognition of housing-related issues such as health, energy efficiency, poverty and social inclusion.

In October 2016, the Partnership was invited to present its main findings and recommendations to the All Party Parliamentary Group for Healthy Homes and Buildings and its work is referenced in the APPG's July 2017 Green Paper Building our Future:

Laying the Foundations for Healthy Homes and Buildings

Consultation on the Green Paper will be followed by evidence sessions, to which the Partnership hopes to contribute. The Green Paper looks to a future where all buildings are built or renovated to the highest possible health and wellbeing standards and the APPG aims to:

- 'work with Government to establish a cross departmental committee for health and buildings to champion change in the sector, recognising the interaction between buildings, health, education and the economy;
- begin building the research and evidence, starting with a focus on housing and schools, to develop a clear case for further government action on standards for new build; and
- make housing (including renovation) an infrastructure priority and develop plans for retrofitting the current housing stock that take a holistic approach to maximising health and wellbeing.'



SLA Properties in Birmingham

International Visitors

Professor Man Hee Han from Seoul

Cementing links with HCRG and CURS



Chris Watson

The Housing and Communities Research Group was pleased to welcome Professor Man-Hee Han as an Academic Visitor in the School of Social Policy from August 2016 to February 2017.

Professor Han was affiliated also to the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS) in the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences.

Professor Han, an alumnus of the University of Birmingham (PhD, Urban and Regional Studies, 1992), is Dean of the International School of Urban Sciences at the University of Seoul and was formerly First Vice-Minister in the Ministry of Land, Transport and Maritime Affairs, Government of Korea.

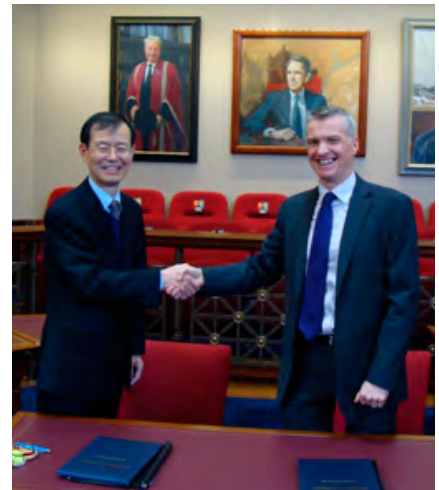
Professor Han's sabbatical in HCRG enabled him to undertake internationally oriented research on housing markets, with a focus on the policies introduced by governments to alleviate the financial burden of low income people, especially in the private rented sector. Professor Han worked with colleagues in HCRG including Chris Watson, David Mullins and Alan Murie. He met senior officials of the Department of Communities and Local Government and Birmingham City Council; community activists and elected

representatives in Selly Oak, Birmingham; and housing academics and practitioners from throughout the West Midlands and beyond, partly through his participation in our regular HCR Network seminars.

Professor Han's visit also enabled discussions to be concluded on the signing of a *Memorandum of Understanding* between the University of Birmingham, the University of Seoul and Seoul Metropolitan Government. Among other things, a group of Masters students in Urban and Regional Planning visit Seoul each year for the 'Seoul Case Study Programme' (SCSP), as part of an optional postgraduate level module taught by CURS on International Urban Planning.

Seoul Case Study Programme

The MoU was signed in February 2017 by Professor Han for the University of Seoul and by the Provost and Vice-Principal, Professor Tim Jones, for the University of Birmingham, following which a group of CURS Master's students, led by Dr Mike Beazley, Director of



Memorandum of Understanding between the University of Seoul, Seoul Metropolitan Government and the University of Birmingham is signed by Professor Man-Hee Han (left) and Professor Tim Jones

CURS, took part in SCSP for the first time in May 2017. The programme is a partnership between Seoul Metropolitan Government and the University of Seoul. Designed for graduate students from selected universities in the USA and UK, it consists of six days intensive study in Seoul, with briefings and field visits on topics such as urban planning and management, environmental policy, transportation, e-government, housing and welfare policies, and community engagement.

With a population of over 10 million in a metropolitan area of over 25 million people, the city of Seoul provides an excellent case study of international urban development.



Birmingham Students in Seoul at Case Study Programme

Three month Erasmus Placement with HCRG and Accord Housing Group

Social housing management models: Comparing Spain, the UK and the Netherlands



Nuria Lambea

The shares of housing tenures in Spain have not changed much after 10 years of the burst of the economic and housing bubble: nearly 80% of homeownership, and a very small rental market.

In a country with an unemployment rate of 20% (46% among young people) and a 22% of households at a risk of poverty, the population with no options to enter the private market without getting over-indebted has abruptly increased: rents are expensive and there are still constraints in getting a mortgage. In addition, Spain has a mere 2% of social housing stock; this is explained mainly by the trend of promoting home ownership even within the social housing sector.

According to the Resolution of the European Parliament, 11 June 2013, having a sufficient pool of affordable housing is essential to achieve a real right to housing and according to the report of the European Commission "Promoting protection of the right to housing - Homelessness prevention in the context of evictions" (2016). Affordable housing is also considered as a structural measure to prevent evictions and homelessness. In this vein, current Spanish housing policies aim at increasing the social housing stock; but managing a much bigger stock requires to create efficient managing structures.

Spain nowadays, although with existing and interesting projects going on, in general terms counts with an unstructured and dispersed social housing management system, with a broad variety of providers but with a preponderance of public managers. This implies that most of social housing development depends on public budget, which seems to be insufficient as it is evidenced when social and media pressure increase when physically stopping evictions (even after a firm court resolution) or when some judges allow certain kind of squatting (as they cannot be offered another affordable possibility), which has been called "Robindprudence" (Nasarre-Aznar 2015).

Taking all this into consideration, my research focus compares management models in countries with large social housing stock. The Netherlands (32%) and the United Kingdom (18%) are two main examples, and the notable element is that private non-profit entities are leading the management of this sector. It should be noted, though, that these two models also differ between them, and while Dutch housing associations (woningcorporaties) have gone from a less to a more public control and regulation (they also have financial independence since the mid-nineties), English housing associations are taking the opposite way: from more to less public control and more dependence on the private financing sources.

What makes the housing association model interesting is precisely their positioning between three interests: the private market, the community and the State (Mullins 2010).

As private entities, they need to look for an efficient management of the resources, which also leads to professionalization of the sector. Their capacity to combine public and private financing sources and their capacity to cross-subsidize allow them to invest in the social housing sector on an ongoing basis (not depending only on the public budget) as well as the capacity to offer a broad variety of housing tenures and also allowing to create mixed projects (important to create social mix). Even though they are private entities, they provide for a public service; therefore, proper regulation and public control is important. Moreover, their registration allows, on the one hand,

municipalities to acknowledge the existing entities working in different areas, giving rise to coordination or collaboration not only for the liveability of the neighbourhood but also to implement regeneration and urban renewal projects. On the other hand, clear rules to access subsidies avoid unfair competition; and, in its turn, competition to access subsidies leads to the need of the housing associations to offer better quality for less price, and also complementary services.

Another practice to be under-pinned is the offer of services that go beyond the access to an accommodation.

Some of the services are focused on the support and development of the tenant itself (support, care, training, job seeking, benefits advice, etc.) while others focus on the community (mediation, provision of sport facilities, cultural centres, etc.). Finally, tenants' involvement in the housing associations management is also very important in order to achieve committed and involved tenants that help to smooth the functioning of this housing sector management and also to keep a good environment in the neighbourhood.



Nuria and Steve Forrest enjoy a pint at HCRG night out



Nuria joins HCRG colleagues David, Jon Stevens, Maddy Bunker, Bingzi He and Accord placement host Carl Taylor for a Chinese meal

All these good practices are the ones worth studying to import into the Spanish social housing management scheme, as they are also in line with the goals and principles of the New Urban Agenda, approved in Quito (October 2016). It deals about social cohesion, inclusion and people

empowerment. Also, it strengthens the need to create links among education, employment, housing and health in order to prevent exclusion and segregation. I wouldn't like to finish this contribution without highlighting my profound gratitude to the Housing and Communities Research

Group of the University of Birmingham for hosting me and sharing their knowledge with me, and particularly to Prof. David Mullins, from whom I have learned a lot and thanks to whom I have been able to undertake such a fruitful research. I would also like to thank the Accord Group and Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP, for showing me the professional and practical perspective, key to fully understand the schemes of managing social housing in the UK.

Núria Lambea-Llop, Doctoral researcher, UNESCO Housing Chair. Rovira i Virgili University, Tarragona, Spain.
Email: nuria.lambea@urv.cat

In November we welcome another international PhD visitor – this time **Jordan King** from New Zealand under the Universitas 21 scheme.

In Spring 2018 we welcome **Jasmine Palmer**, Lecturer in Architecture and Sustainable Design, School of Art, Architecture and Design University of South Australia.

Honorary Fellows & PhD candidates

Linking academical to practitioner's approach



Thea Raisbeck

I had already spent seven years working in the social housing and domestic abuse sectors when I decided to return to the University of Birmingham to study for an MA in Social Policy.

I was undecided after graduating whether to continue and complete a PhD but the lure of the practitioner perspective proved too much and I secured employment with the homelessness charity Crisis.

However, it has always been my (perhaps naive) aim to combine and enrich academic and policy research with a more 'frontline' perspective and to mobilise the homelessness and housing sectors by creating meaningful partnerships within academia.

I have valued enormously the links I have made within the Housing and Communities Research Group whilst working at Crisis.

The collaborative approach we have taken to investigating and tackling the problem of 'exempt' supported accommodation in Birmingham is, I would hope, something that will continue into the future.

As such, I am incredibly proud to have been awarded an honorary position within the Housing and Communities Research Group and hope that this will give me the opportunity not only to improve and maintain my own academic practice, but to highlight and bring an additional perspective to research and teaching around homelessness and low income housing within the University.

I believe that having the perspective of an experienced housing and homelessness sector 'insider' means I am able to bring to prominence issues and problems that are not always immediately apparent or obvious within, sometimes more detached, academic and policy studies. I therefore hope that I will be able to encourage and promote interest in less researched problems and communities

and, most of all, promote to Social Policy students the importance of housing and homelessness as areas of study, alongside the reciprocal benefits of combining academic study with frontline, practitioner-based work. As I'm never able to leave academic study far from my longer term plans, I also believe that this honorary position will help me to narrow and finesse some burgeoning ideas for that forthcoming PhD!

Thea presents her first HRCN seminar on November 9th (see Events section below). Please come along to learn more about the exempt accommodation sector in Birmingham.

Thea Raisbeck, HCRG Honorary Research Associate



Thea meets with Emeritus Prof Alan Murie, Nuria and Steve at HCRG night out.

Christopher Watson recently extended his HCRG Fellowship to August 2018; and continues alongside Jon Stevens (community-led housing and older people), Jon Fitzmaurice (self-help housing and bringing empty homes into use).

Peter Shanks moves into the PhD phase of his 1+3 ESRC grant this year for his thesis on *Paradox perspectives on housing association governance in Northern Ireland*. He joins three current PhD candidates: **Bingzi He** on *Five pillars of collaborative housing in China and England*, **Simone**

Helleren on *What factors constrain and what factors enable young people with experience of complex and interlinking problems including homelessness to engage with help?*, and **Steve Forrest** on the *Regional Planning and Housing in the West Midlands Regional*

Feature

Citizen Power and Housing



Jon Stevens

Jon Stevens reflects on his newly published account of community action in Birmingham in the 1970's and 1980's

The recent Grenfell Tower tragedy has occasioned much debate and comment on the UK's unfolding housing crisis, on the limitations and inadequacies of recent government housing policies and on the manifest failings of our major housing developers and providers. A common refrain has been that the people from the groups and communities most in need of support and assistance have been excluded and ignored, both when it came to limiting and mitigating the worst excesses of the private housing market and also when it came

to allocating increasingly limited public resources to effectively meet their needs and aspirations.

As someone who has been involved for over forty years in community-based or community-led housing, I have followed this debate with a growing sense of unease and anger. And I found myself asking, how and why did we come to abandon what might be called the post-war housing settlement, which dictated government housing policy between 1945 and the mid 1980's? And

equally, why have we largely rejected the important lessons we learnt towards the end of this period about the central importance of ensuring people can participate in the regeneration and renewal of their homes and neighbourhoods?

Community Forum

What made all of this especially poignant for me is that over the last three years I have been involved in producing an account of the work of an organisation called *Community Forum* that I worked for from 1975 to 1984. Community Forum was a network of inner city residents' associations and community groups in Birmingham that played a pivotal role in ensuring that local communities were effectively engaged in the implementation of the Council's ground-breaking Urban Renewal Programme.

Background

Launched in 1972, the **Urban Renewal Programme** was the largest programme of private sector market renewal ever carried out by a local authority in the UK. It was a rolling programme of investment in house improvement and neighbourhood regeneration that impacted on dozens of inner city communities; with over 50,000 mainly pre-1919 homes being renovated and improved across the city. The success of the programme relied on extensive liaison and co-operation with property owners and landlords and with local residents' groups.

Community Forum was formed shortly after the launch of the programme in 1973 and, for the following 25 years, it had a significant influence; firstly, on the overall shape and direction of the programme; secondly, on how key elements of the programme were delivered; and finally on subsequent developments (including the Council's revised approach to clearance and redevelopment in the 1980's).

Community Forum was always independent of the Council with its own funding

This was critical to its integrity as a representative body and it enabled Forum to take a robust approach in all of its dealings with the Council.

In October 2013, we marked the **40th anniversary** of the launch of Community Forum with an event attended by around 40 people including former officers and members of Forum; community workers, who worked for and with Forum; local politicians and officers associated with the Urban Renewal Programme; and academics and researchers from Birmingham Polytechnic Planning School (now part of Birmingham City University) and from Birmingham University (particularly from the Centre for Urban Regional Studies). All agreed that Birmingham (and other urban areas) had much to learn today from the approaches and methods developed at that time.

Publication: *Residents Renewing Their City: The Story of Community Forum*

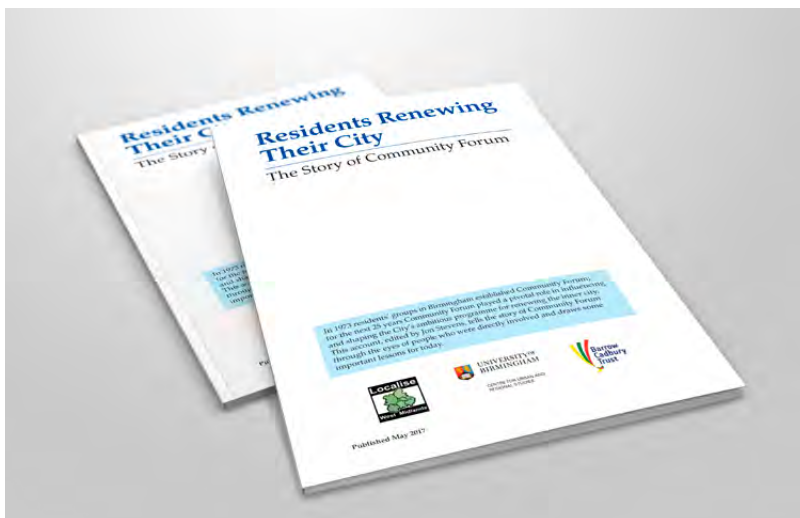
Following the event, a fuller account of the work of Community Forum was brought together as *Residents Renewing Their City: The Story of Community Forum*,

and published by Localise West Midlands and the Centre for Regional Studies of the University of Birmingham. This includes personal reminiscences from people who were directly involved with Community Forum and with the Urban Renewal Programme. **Mike Gibson**, then of Community Planning Associates and the Birmingham School of Planning and Landscape, describes the genesis of both the Urban Renewal programme and of Community Forum and how community participation was seen as central to the success of the programme from the outset. **Barry Toon**, the former Treasurer of Community Forum and someone who has been involved in community action for all of his life, describes the challenges Community Forum faced in creating a city-wide network of residents' groups and he reflects on the methods and tactics which

were used over a period of 25 years to ensure that residents were able to have a real voice and to successfully exert influence. Forum's workers, **Frances Heywood** and **myself**, describe a number of campaigns and interventions we were involved in and Frances goes on to discuss the work that was done in the 1980's to challenge and change the Council's whole approach to clearance and redevelopment. **Peter Archer**, one of the first Project Team Leaders explains how his team implemented the programme locally; operating with a surprising degree of autonomy and liaising closely with residents' groups and local politicians. Finally, **Eric Adams**, then of the Barrow Cadbury Trust, explains why they were prepared to fund Community Forum largely on a 'no strings attached basis' for over ten years, based on their commitment to supporting effective community



Great Russell St, Birmingham, 1967
During the enforced mass demolition of homes, with tower-blocks being constructed behind.
Photo by Phyllis Nicklin, Geography lecturer at Birmingham University.



Residents Renewing Their City: The Story of Community Forum

engagement in housing and planning in Birmingham at that time.

My introductory chapter describes housing and urban policy in Birmingham from 1945 until the inception of the Urban Renewal Programme. This was a period when both central and local government were committed to the renewal of the country's housing infrastructure in a way that is difficult to imagine now. This involved not only the construction of tens of thousands of Council homes but it also involved some support for low income home owners in improving their homes and rent regulation across the private rented sector. The way in which the Birmingham City Council carried out the post-war clearance and redevelopment programme was at times heavy handed but the scale of their ambition was remarkable.

During the 1960's, there was growing pressure for more effective public participation in housing and planning. At the end of the chapter, I describe the development of the community action movement and of advocacy planning nationally and I show how both of these helped to shape and influence the Council's thinking, when they decided in 1972 to switch from large-scale clearance to a city-wide house improvement programme. The Council's commitment to public participation in the programme became one of its defining features, as amply illustrated in the chapters that follow. This is not to say that residents and communities always had the degree

of influence that they aspired to, far from it. Nor is it true that these practices extended to other parts of the Council, with the City Housing Department largely paternalistic in its dealings with Council tenants. But it is a recognition that in the case of urban renewal in Birmingham many people and communities were engaged in a way that seems very different from the world of Grenfell Tower.

In the final chapter, I reflect on the dramatic changes to the housing policy landscape since large-scale Council house building and city-wide housing improvement programmes. Those days when it was accepted that the government had a fundamental interest in maintaining the whole of the country's housing stock are long gone.

Currently there is virtually no government investment in improving older housing and only very limited investment in new social housing for people on low incomes.

And the very idea of rent regulation of the private rented sector (let alone other controls) is seen as an unjustified attack on the domain of the private market. Social housing is now a minority tenure, with owner occupation in retreat and with only the private rented sector expanding year-on-

year. This has overturned the assumptions underpinning urban renewal that the private sector would continue to decline and that its role would largely be taken over by newly established and typically community-based housing associations.

In these changed circumstances, local authorities such as Birmingham, given the lack of government funding for housing and the dramatic cutbacks to their revenue budgets, find themselves largely sidelined.

And where renewal and regeneration is happening, it tends to be based on private-public partnerships, in which low-income residents and poorer communities find themselves increasingly marginalised, as we have seen in North Kensington and in many other areas. The chapter goes on to describe some recent community-based initiatives and looks at how local authorities can still intervene to protect peoples living conditions and to lever in scarce resources. Nonetheless, it all feels like a far cry from the post-war years of public investment in housing and renewal and those times when residents' groups backed by Community Forum 'sat round the table' with councilors and officers to take decisions about how their homes and areas should be renewed.

Jon Stevens, Honorary Research Fellow Housing and Communities Research Group

Residents Renewing Their City: The Story of Community Forum is available in [PDF format](#)

There will be a chance to discuss the contemporary relevance of Jon's work on citizen power at the HCRN Seminar on December 14th (see Events below).

There is also a print version of the report which is available at £10 a copy from Jon Stevens on jon.stevens777@gmail.com

Conferences

European Network for Housing Research

Tirana, September 2017

This year David and Anita were the lead co-ordinators for the Working Group on Social Housing Institutions Organisations and Governance at the ENHR Tirana Conference. Peter Shanks also presented a paper based in his PhD framework for exploring paradox in housing governance.

In addition to our core themes of hybridity and governance of affordable housing, we also held sessions on financialisation and housing provision, supply chain management, social assistance through the private rental sector and hosted a new ENHR workshop on empty homes. In all 16 papers (5 of them from PhD candidates) were delivered and 13 countries were covered in presentations highlighting the rapid changes that are occurring in the arena of social and affordable housing by exploring policies, actors and outcomes. Participants deployed a variety of types of analysis to interpret these changes including hybridity and paradox theory, policy analysis tools such as policy streams and analysis of financial accounts data. There were case studies, data assembly and mapping at city level and at organisation level as



Social Housing Workshop

well as the national and European levels more commonly found in this field. Some themes that recurred in our discussions were processes such as financialisation, residualisation, privatisation, governance reform, mergers and alliances, procurement and supply chains. Papers had a strong focus on consequences for tenants and

people in housing need including escalating rents, displacement from high cost locations, empty homes, and poor quality housing. Meanwhile there was a strong emphasis on the need for policy interventions to mitigate these effects such as regulation, social lettings agencies to manage access to the private rental sector and new ways to bring empty homes into use in Denmark, England and Greece. We also learned about intermediary agencies such as Domicil In Switzerland and organisational partnerships such as the JOE alliance among Community Development Corporations in New York to achieve scale while maintaining locally based organisations.

As usual the group is following up the workshop at a number of levels including a book project on innovation in affordable housing governance and finance led by Gerard van Bortel at TU Delft and further ENHR work on the empty homes theme by David Mullins and Thomas Maloutas, Athens Local Organising Committee Member for ENHR 2019.

Fieldtrip to Shkoza

The fieldtrip led by Doris Andoni to Shkoza provided some real insights into the realities and challenges of social housing models in Tirana. A large group of conference attendees descended on the area with cameras and met local social work and housing management workers accompanied by a large group of curious residents and children.

The site visit began by viewing a newly built estate of 6 storey purpose built apartment blocks financed by a loan from the Council of Europe Development Bank. While the external appearance of the blocks was modern and attractive, it was evident that the development had posed a number of challenges for both the residents and the City of Tirana. Ground floor units intended for commercial or retail use had been allocated as temporary accommodation to some Roma families who had been displaced by flooding and fires that burned their shacks. Rent levels were too high for many residents to be able to



Social housing visit to Shkoza, Tirana

afford and the city was faced with the need to subsidise management and maintenance costs and to ensure repayments on the large international loan. Child densities were high and the level of economic activity was evidently low, with some 60% of residents unemployed (according to the manager of the social housing block).

The visit continued with a walk around an adjacent former industrial site that had been occupied by self-builders with dwellings gradually upgraded as residents gained the income to do so. The feel of the neighbourhood was very different



Adjacent self-build housing

to the purpose built social housing estate with a greater emphasis on private defensible space and a greater proliferation of greenery in well-tended gardens. Participants were struck by the differences between these two models of housing low income residents in terms of building process, dwelling design and feel of the neighbourhoods, cost and flexibility for local government and residents and forms of participation and community association. We were left with many reflections and issues to discuss as we returned to the Polis campus for further workshops and plenaries.

International Festival of Social Housing

Amsterdam, June 2017

This exciting international festival set out to illustrate the added value of social housing for sustainable communities through conferences, workshops, tours, presentations, exhibitions, film screenings, debates and installations.

socialhousingfestival.com

It was held at the Het Schip museum of social housing in the classic western garden suburb area of Amsterdam where world

leading social housing was planned and developed in the early twentieth century. One of the many events held in the festival was a research workshop on the past and future of social housing co-organised by Peter Boelhouwer of Delft University with Anita Blessing and David Mullins of the ENHR Social Housing Working Group. Among the participants in the workshop were James Gregory and Nuria Lambea Llop from HCRG.



James and Anita join bicycle trip at Social Housing Festival Amsterdam June 2017

12th European Research Conference on Homelessness

Barcelona, September 2017



Students outside FEANTSA workshop with Catalan flags

In September David and Halima's paper on their social lettings agency research, *Socialising the Private Rented Sector? – The Role and Limits of Social Lettings Agencies*, was presented at the leading international homelessness research conference held by FEANTSA in the beautiful setting of the University of Barcelona.

Over 200 researchers from over 20 countries were at the conference and there

was excellent academic exchange and networking. Our workshop took place under unusual circumstances when hundreds of local students assembled outside the workshop room – not to hear about social lettings but to wave the flag for Catalonia in the democracy protests around the independence referendum planned for October 1st.

Publications

Lang and Stoeger (2017)

The role of the local institutional context in understanding collaborative housing models: empirical evidence from Austria. International Journal of Housing Policy.

Published on line

Mullins (2017)

Achieving policy recognition for community-based housing solutions – the case of self-help housing in England.

International Journal of Housing Policy

Published on line

Mullins, Milligan and Nieboer (2017)

State Directed Hybridity? The Relationship between Non-Profit Housing Organisations and the State in Three National Contexts.

Housing Studies

Published on line

Mullins, Sacranie and Pattison (2017)

Social Lettings Agencies in the West Midlands

Published on line

Mullins and Sacranie (2017)

Let To Birmingham Case Study Report 2016.

Published on line

Mullins and Sacranie (2017)

Social lettings agencies. Literature Review and Typology.

Published online

Mullins, Shanks and Sacranie (2017)

Tenant Involvement in Governance: Models and Practices

Published on line

Stevens et al (2017)

Residents Renewing Their City: The Story of Community Forum.

Published on line

Events

Free Housing and Communities Network Seminars to be held at University of Birmingham

OCT

12

October 12th 2017 – Nicki Morrison, University of Cambridge: *Empire building? The drivers and implications of mega-mergers in the English housing association sector*

NOV

9

November 9th 2017 – Thea Raisbeck, HCRG Honorary Research Associate: *The Exempt Accommodation Sector in Birmingham – what is it, who lives there and how can they be engaged in its improvement?*

DEC

14

December 14th 2017 – Jon Stevens, HCRG Honorary Fellow: *Citizen Power and Housing: Lessons from Community Action and Urban Renewal in Birmingham in the 1970s'. Followed by Christmas refreshments*

MARCH

8

March 8th 2018 – Anita Blessing, Marie Curie Fellow: *Re-Invest – Affordable Housing in Amsterdam, New York and London: The Story to date*

APRIL

18

April 18th 2018 – Jasmine Palmer, Lecturer in Architecture and Sustainable Design, University of South Australia: *Collective self-organised housing in Australia, the UK and Berlin*

External speaking events promoting HCRG Research

September 27th 2017 – David Mullins presents on *Empty homes and community led Renovation* at 6^o workshop internacional: 'Vivienda vacía y rehabilitación comunitaria' Rovira i Virgili University, Tarragona, Spain

October 19th 2017 – David Mullins presents on *Models of tenant engagement in housing governance Flemish Tenant Union*, University of Antwerp, Belgium

October 24th 2017 – David Mullins presents on *Securing Policy support for community-based housing solutions to empty homes in England* at Responsible Business Research Seminar University of Northumbria, Business School

November 22nd 2017 – David Mullins presents on *Models of tenant engagement in housing governance European Foundation for Living*, Autumn Conference, Ghent, Belgium

November 30th 2017 – David Mullins presents on *Alternative solutions. Spectacular North East examples* at Hexham Housing Debates, Society of St. Vincent De Paul (Hexham) with Hexham Quakers, St. Mary's Parish Centre, Hexham