The community housing industry
Maximising opportunities

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Understanding change in community housing: generating new and relevant forms of evidence

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Community housing

A word about language

- Third sector or non-profit?
- Voluntary sector
- Charities
- Hybrids
- State/market and community driven
- Housing associations
- Social housing
- Affordable housing
- Community Housing Providers

How you describe yourself affects who you are!
What is the Delphi method?

- Applied social science method
- Cold War origins
- Includes both qualitative and quantitative elements
- Harnesses views of ‘experts’
- Identifies areas of agreement and disagreement about set of issues
- Iterative process—more visible to participants and sponsors than many methods
- Most common use is in forecasting future
Why we chose Delphi

- Technique for futures research (consulting the oracle)
- Harnesses views of change-makers (confidentiality)
- Builds on existing knowledge (issues and organisations)
- Dialogue and understanding between participants
- Identifies areas of agreement and difference
- Good for scanning wide range of topics and focusing on most important (start)
- Also good for fine tuning of scenarios (end)
- Combines qualitative and quantitative approaches (patterns and understanding)
- Allows time-series analysis (improvement on snap-shot surveys)
1. Recruit panel

2. Research topic to identify key issues and questions (e.g. using PEST, SWOT)

3. Develop and pilot and test questionnaire

4. Convene first round and analyse responses to highlight
   - Average views and distribution of views
   - Identify areas of consensus and divergence

5. Discuss with panel members (Round 2)
   - Provide opportunity to amend responses
   - Understand reasons for different responses

6. Refine analysis and identify questions for further rounds
   - Shift from scanning to scenario building
Discuss with panel

- Panel members discuss their responses in relation to whole panel ratings
- Were their responses recorded as intended?
- Explain why particular responses were made
- Opportunity to change responses
- Identify important issues omitted by questionnaire
- This process builds understanding and allows better interpretation of results

Co-production—a recipe for relevance
Seeing things differently

- Seeing change from organisational perspective rather than policy perspective
  - insider views of strategic positioning & strategic adaptation to policy and other external influences

- Building a rich picture of areas of convergence & divergence

- Comparative analysis: how do housing NFPs fare in different contexts?
  - Significance of policy & institutional contexts to success of third sector forms of social housing provision
  - Changed policy, financing & market environment since GFC

- Longitudinal analysis: how do organisations adapt over time?
Applications to housing

- **What are housing associations becoming?** English panel studies 1997–2000—how did sector respond to change of Government?

- **Non-profit Housing Organisations in Ireland, North and South: changing forms and challenging futures**—comparative cross-border study of organisational fields and policy drivers

- **Shifting back in the Dutch social housing sector**—longitudinal look at HAs adapting to GFC and changed political environment

- **Understanding leadership, strategy and organisational dynamics**—growth and diversification in Australian community housing
Conceptualising findings
Hybrid organisations

- ‘Having ‘significant characteristics of more than one sector (public, private & third)’ (Billis)
- Hybridisation involves balancing state, market & civil society interests & accountabilities—‘competing logics’
- Monstrous Hybrids—out of control (Koppell)

The ‘ideal’ hybrid (Karré)
Conceptualising findings
Social enterprise

- A superblend or a balancing act? (Blessing)
- ‘Using business means to pursue social ends’ (Peattie & Morley)
- Trading in housing (& non-housing) activities and using cross subsidy to increase social housing supply

Sources and further reading


Delphi findings from English panels

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Some key themes
1997–2014

- **Growth of organisations** through organic growth, stock transfer and merger (sector *2 since 1995 to 2.3 million-Largest organisation now 94,000 homes)

- **Diverse organisational forms** and strategies reflecting mission, local contexts and enterprise

- **Market increasingly important** from mixed funding 1988, driving down of capital subsidy to under 25% costs

- **Cross-subsidy**—balance sheets, surpluses and **credit ratings the symbols of success**

- **To 2013** total borrowing £52B, total public subsidy £45B, annual turnover £14.8B annual surplus £1.9B, book value of assets £91B
Some key themes
1997–2014

- Two HAs in England have AA-ratings—higher than many countries are rated—Australia excepted!
Some long term themes

- Continued impact of **state regulation and commissioning** despite quest for ‘independence’
- **Social and community drivers key to origins** but being transformed through hybridisation
- **Diversification to support communities** always important for many HAs—recent drivers accelerating growth in community investment
Some long term themes

- In 1963, Bruce Kenrick moved to Notting Hill and was shocked at the poor quality of housing that people were forced to live in. He began a fundraising drive, with the aim to raise enough money to buy one home to house several homeless families. Notting Hill Housing Trust was born, and in their first year they had bought five houses and housed 57 people. Within five years, they became a large presence in west London, housing nearly 1000 people.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j1vcLoJnmsQ
2014 highlights

- **Welfare reform** the biggest external driver
- **Wider state retreat** leading some HAs to widen remit and role
2014 highlights

Shift in core focus away from rental housing for lowest income groups

- Variety of drivers:
  - Affordable Housing Programme—80% market rents
  - Cross-subsidy response to falling grant
  - Market rent opportunities
  - Sector leadership vision

http://www.hothouse.org.uk/towards-a-vision/housing-associations-in-2033/

‘Collectively we could build one home for market rent or sale for every two affordable homes.’
2014 highlights

- Big increase in interest in IT and digital inclusion
- Partly stimulated by shock of welfare reform
  - Customer profiling
  - On-line payments
2014 highlights

- Mergers now seen as a possibility by most HAs including those who had previously not been interested
- Diversification focusing on housing products (market rent & sale) & employment/financial inclusion of tenants
2014 highlights

- Interest in communities and localism
  ... but not asset transfer

  “you don’t give away your magic wand”

  ... assets differentiate HAs from other non-profits

This social enterprise brings empty homes into use, has grown its asset base and manages homes for HAs
Whither Australian community housing?

A commercialised social purpose sector?

A more participative community focused sector?

A shadow state with public housing at the core?
Sources and further reading

Homes and Communities Agency (2013) Global Accounts of Housing Providers

Mullins D and Riseborough M (2000) What are Housing Associations Becoming? Housing Research at CURS No 7


