

HOUSING SYMPOSIUM ABSTRACTS

Peter Ambrose, University of Brighton

The real meaning of affordability

I intend to make the point that all Government policy appears to be about solving the problem with supply side expansion of output (and an obsession with owning). In my view the problem is affordability as well as supply. And prices and rents have been drastically pushed up over last 3 decades (slides will be shown) by the explosion of house purchase credit. So there will no solution unless this issue is addressed.

John Bone, University of Aberdeen, with Karen O'Reilly, Loughborough University
'On the Treadmill'

'On the Treadmill' is an ongoing research project that applies an original (social neuroscientific) theoretical framework to explore the impact of various anti-structural processes, integral to the current trajectory of neo-liberal led globalization, on the personal and social well being of young adults in the UK. One strand of the research is aimed at investigating the implications of deregulation in global labour markets, and the manner in which this has been experienced in rising employee insecurity in the UK labour market. Also, and the issue that is the key focus of this particular paper, the social implications of the global house price bubble of the last few years are also of crucial interest, in recognition of the fact that home ownership currently requires younger people - at least those who can afford to do so - to commit increasing levels of their income if they are to have any prospect of ever buying a first home. It is our view that, when the implications of these developments are taken together, they hold the potential to produce profound and, as yet, largely unanticipated social consequences for many young British adults, as well as for UK society as a whole. Through this research we wish to uncover the form and extent to which the experience of this group of young Britons departs from that of other 'post-war' generations and to try to identify any policy initiatives that might usefully be applied to addressing the range of social and personal problems which, we anticipate, are likely to arise from the current direction of socio-economic change.

Stuart Cameron, University of Newcastle

The Changing Face of Housing Market Renewal in England

The programme of Market Renewal Pathfinders, and other market renewal initiatives, was originally justified as addressing a problem of low housing demand in urban areas in Northern England. This rationale has increasingly given way to two other concerns: the creation of socially-mixed communities and the linkage of neighbourhood and housing policies to what are seen as the needs of regional economic regeneration and modernisation. The paper will draw on examples to critically examine the arguments for housing market renewal and its relevance to the needs of existing residents.

Andrew Field, Scottish Federation of Housing Associations

A View from the SFHA

The coming months will see two major events shape the future for housing in Scotland. The "zero based approach" of the Comprehensive Spending Review is going to see both less public funding available in the coming years and is going to herald the next big review of what, how and why the public sector operates the way it does. Secondly, the Scottish Government's Housing Options Paper will outline the

ideas that this administration has to direct the future of the sector. In what is going to be a far more challenging environment for all of us involved in the delivery of housing, how will we try and make our own futures instead of having them imposed upon us?

Rachel England, Scottish Government

The future of social housing: the new Government's perspective

The paper will describe the Government's objectives for social housing, how these relate to the Government's wider strategic objectives, and the pressures on the social housing sector that need to be addressed if the Government is to achieve its objectives for the sector.

Sarah Glynn, University of Edinburgh

An alternative Housing Strategy for Scotland?

The focus of this paper is on reversing the current emphasis on housing as investment rather than homes, which, it is argued, is an important source of increasing social division. As well as fiscal measures to keep house prices more in line with inflation, the paper argues for a new investment in council housing to make renting an attractive option to home ownership and break the spiral of increasing social division and the pressures of mortgage indebtedness. As immediate priorities, it argues for an end to the idealisation of home ownership and an end to the promotion of Stock Transfer and the Right to Buy; and it argues for a thorough reassessment of current understandings about social housing need and demand, and about mixed tenure, refocusing research and analysis to address the social role of housing.

Andrew MacLaran, Trinity College, Dublin, and Sinéad Kelly, National University of Ireland, Maynooth

The impact of recent changes in the Irish housing system

Although Ireland has a lengthy pedigree regarding the non-market provision of dwellings, recent changes in Irish housing policy have increasingly emphasised the role of the private sector, both in the development of new housing and in the renewal of social-housing estates. This paper reviews the impact of three significant policy developments.

First, Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, requires that, in the case of private-sector residential developments, the developer is obliged to transfer up to 20 per cent of sites/units for social and/or affordable housing use, the aim being to provide local authorities with access to development land/dwellings cheaply and to increase 'social mix' by mixing tenures within new developments. While this was broadly understood by trades unions under the Irish state's national 'partnership process' (between government, business and trades' unions) as a means of providing additional social housing and affordable owner-occupied units, it has instead become the primary way in which local authorities have delivered social housing. It has thus rendered the output of social housing highly dependent on the vicissitudes of private-sector development activity.

Secondly, the Dublin Development Plan, 2002, in which a stated policy objective is to increase the mixing of tenures geographically, has effectively eliminated the development of new social housing in city wards where 50 per cent of the existing

dwelling stock comprised social housing. In an Irish context in which the scale of the social-housing stock is closely correlated with the incidence of acute deprivation, it is worrying to note the withdrawal from acutely deprived inner-city areas such a key element of welfare support.

Thirdly, the national government has required local authorities to consider the option of Public-Private Partnerships when engaging in large-scale regeneration programmes for its social housing stock. The PPP approach has been vigorously adopted by Dublin City Council and the paper reports on the serious impact which this has had on the scale of social-housing provision in the inner city. It also notes the extraordinarily generous financial benefits which such deals can bring to the private-sector partner, wherein substantial local-authority assets, primarily embodied in the value of the land, have been given to the private sector in exchange for very limited returns.

In conjunction with vigorous urban renewal and regeneration policies encouraging new residential development in deprived inner-city areas, these policy developments have effectively underpinned and legitimated a process of intensive inner-city gentrification in which new development has overwhelmingly comprised dwellings for owner occupation and private renting. While being branded as policies aimed ostensibly at assisting the regeneration of deprived inner-city communities, there is little evidence to suggest that they have actually brought much benefit. Indeed, there is considerable evidence to show that they have greatly added to the problems of an already-deprived inner-city working-class community.

David Manley, University of St Andrews

Mixing Tenures - in search of Scottish evidence

This paper uses the 1991 and 2001 Census data for Scotland and considers the evidence base for the efficacy of mixing tenures in a Scottish context. We critically question the supposed benefits of mixing through the lack of apparent beneficial outcomes drawn from the analysis. Conclusions are drawn and a plan for further research is outlined.

Hilary Thomson, MRC Glasgow

Healthy housing investment in Scotland: lessons from a systematic review of housing improvement studies

The relationship between poor housing and poor health is complex but suggests that investment in housing improvement will lead to subsequent health improvement. Evidence on the health impacts of housing improvement is increasing in both quantity and quality. The best available evidence, from New Zealand, suggests that provision of affordable warmth leads to tangible health improvements in the short term: but studies from the UK report only marginal impacts on health. There are various possible explanations for these conflicting findings which will be discussed.