

# **The Potential for Community-led housing: recent developments in England**

David Mullins

Housing and Communities Research Group,  
University of Birmingham

Academic Visitor City Futures Research Centre,  
University of NSW

City Futures Seminar, UNSW Sydney May 21 2014

# Summary

## **1. What is community-led housing?**

- Current state of play in England

## **2. What is driving it and what are its advantages?**

- Long term and short term drivers
- Key benefits and motivations

## **3. Scaling-up – why and how?**

- Tensions between replication and scale
- Barriers to Scaling-up
- Some short cuts to Scaling-up
- Some elements of Enabling Frameworks

# 1. What is Community-Led Housing?

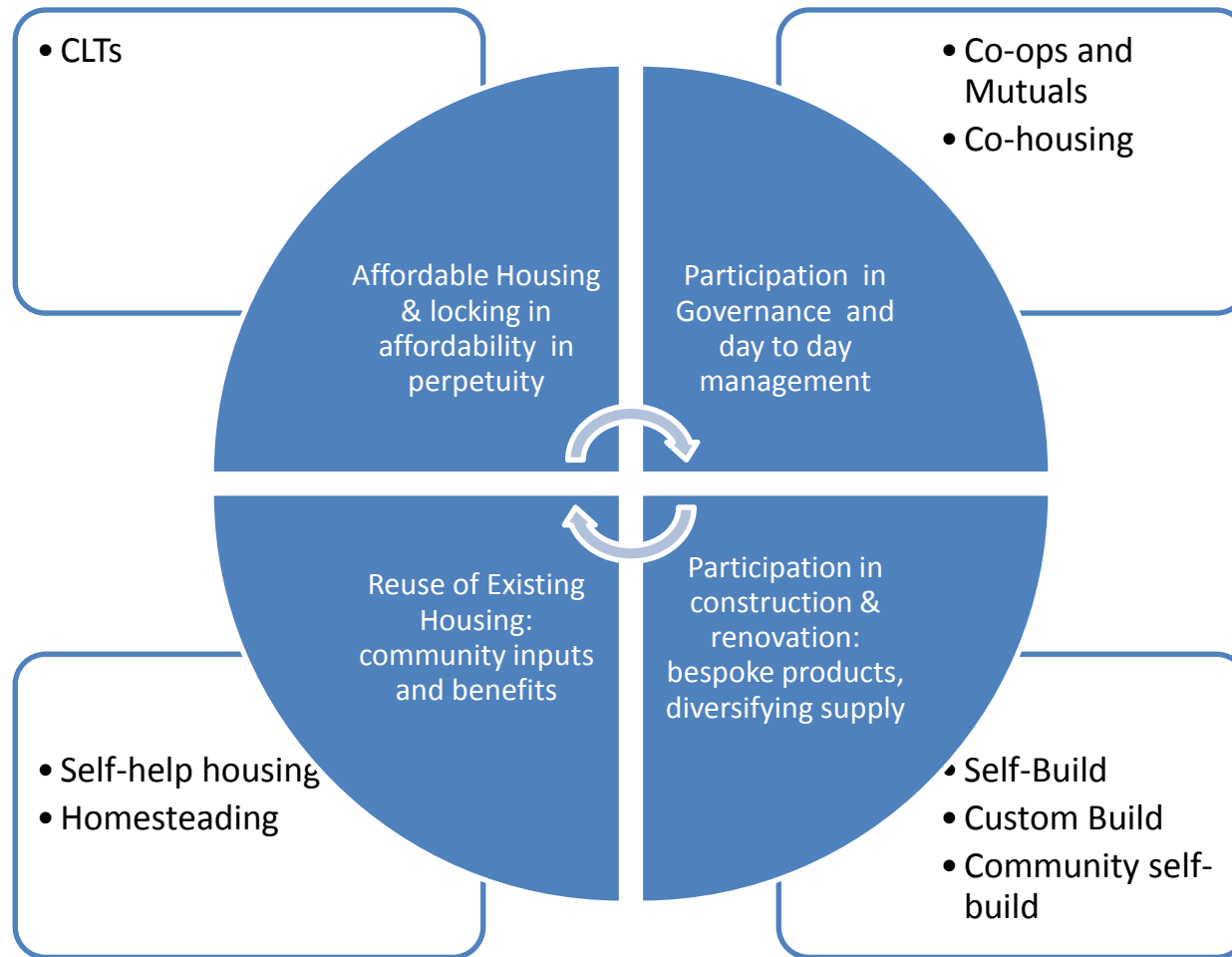
*‘a range of models and approaches with varying aims and aspirations. This includes Community Land Trusts, mutuals and co-operatives, co-housing, self-build and others’*  
(Homes and Communities Agency, 2011)

*“homes that are developed and/or managed by local people or residents, in not for private profit organisational structures. The detail of the organisational structure can be varied, but governance should be overseen by people who either live or work in the locality of benefit or are direct beneficiaries.”* (Gooding 2013).

*Self-organisation goes beyond ideas of participation emphasising bottom up locally initiated processes through which people express themselves directly and develop community, gaining power for local structures such as housing projects* (id22, 2012)

CLTs may have widespread potential application to Australia to address affordable home ownership concerns, increase the range of housing tenure options available foster community development and social capital and maintain a stock of perpetually affordable housing options. (Crabtree et al 2012)

# Overlapping Aims and Models



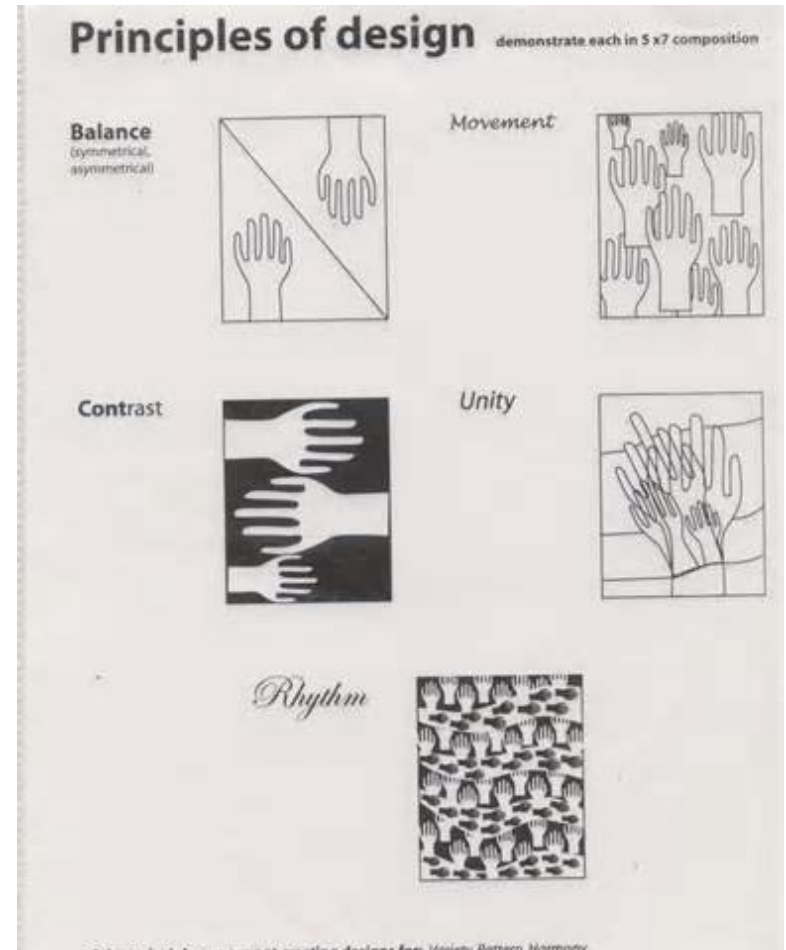
# Some Common Features?

- **Intentional communities**
- **Glocal and small scale**
- **Alternative to dominant tenures**
- **Self-help but needing external support**
- **Independent origins or stimulated by programmes?**
- **Models may overlap in practice**

*Self-Build can refer to community projects including co-housing, eco-developments and developer led custom-build projects. Such cooperative models already have a proven track record in countries such as Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark, often providing affordable properties that reflect the desires of future owners and tenants. Richard Bacon foreword to Wallace et al 2013*

# Looking for General Principles

- By definition community-led housing provides **bespoke** solutions to problems and is locally led
- Each type of community-led housing has **specific features and advantages**
- Attempts to construct typologies can cut across **local choice menus** and mix and match approach
- This presentation has generic focus to feed into a national consultation event on “**Scaling up Community-led housing**”



# Current State of Play by Sub-Sector

## Co-ops and Mutuels

- 1000 orgs managing 200,000 homes—mainly rented, some mutual home ownership
- Long history and uneven geography reflects periods of national promotion and regions with strong secondary bodies



Housing co-op in Midlands

- **CLTs**
- 160 CLTs developing in England mostly in last 10 years; 30 completed,
- Mainly rural, but 25 urban
- Promotion through national demonstration project, National CLT network and regional umbrellas



Rural CLT site in Midlands

# Current State of Play by Sub-Sector

## Cohousing

- 14 completed schemes and 40+ in development.
- Mix of home ownership and rent *to create mixed tenure communities*

## Self-Help Housing

- Around 120 groups some dating from 1970s
- Recent stimulus from £50m Empty Homes Community Grants programme
- Mix of asset transfer and leases

## Community Self-Build

- 100-150 homes a year as one of seven elements of 11,000 self-build /custom build sector p.a.
- New stimulus provided by 2014 Budget Statement

COMMUNITY  
CAMPUS 87

### Everything!

We turn the discarded and redundant into productive assets that meet need.



More than just a roof.....

Well established self-help housing group in North East

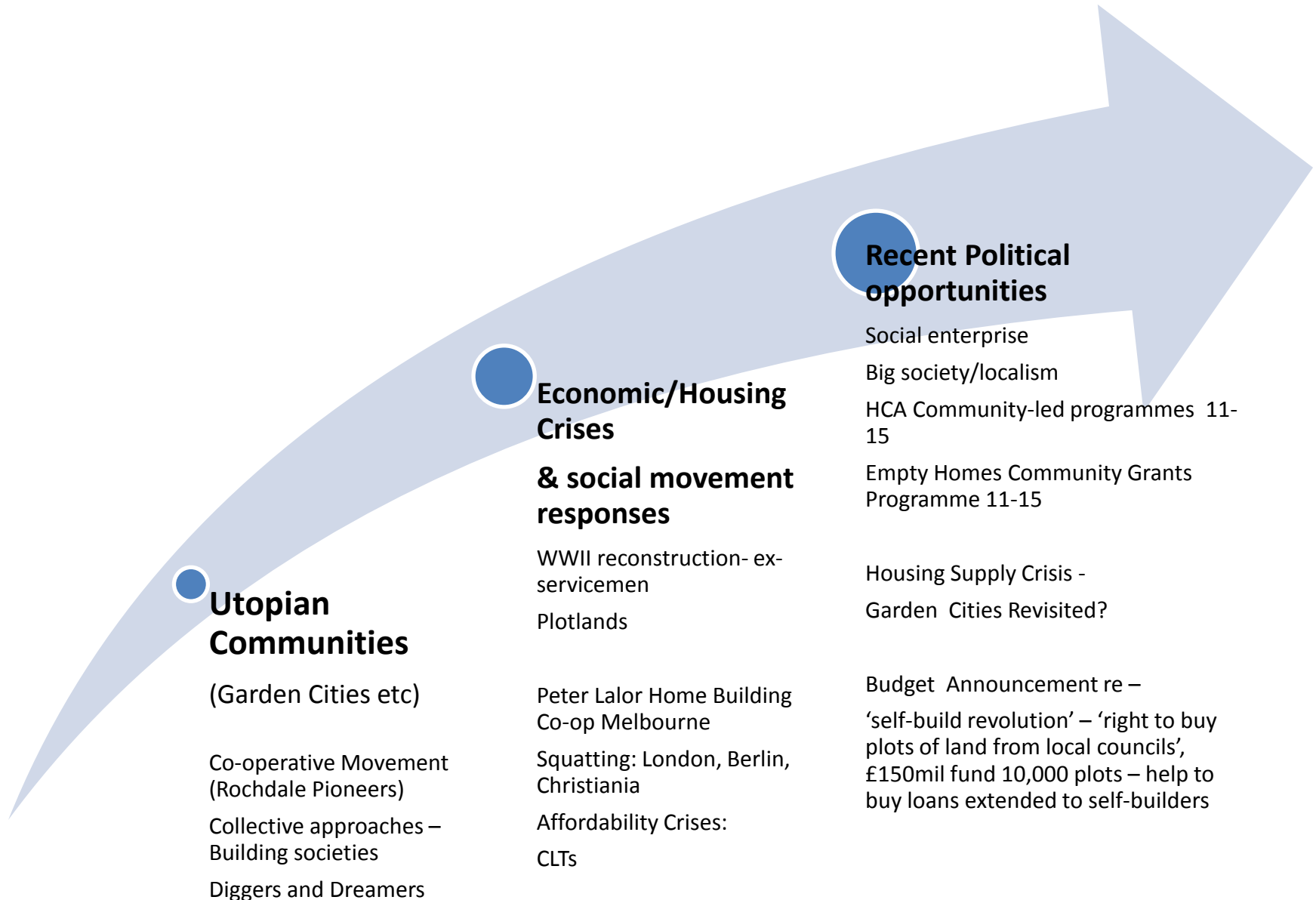


Lilac (Low Impact Living Affordable Community) is a co-housing project built in response to the financial crisis, the threat of global warming and breakdown of local community: Guardian

18/4/2014



## 2. Long term and Short term drivers



# Responding to Dysfunctional Systems

The UK housing market is highly dysfunctional and supply is not meeting demand, not simply in a quantitative sense, but also in relation to space standards, quality, design, affordability and security. While some may see it as unrealistic to offer **community housing as a replacement for larger scale private development, increasing the awareness and scope of these alternative delivery mechanisms** could be an effective way of challenging the status quo by creating additional choice, improving aspirations and therefore empowering consumers and communities. (BSHF 2014)

*then they've, sort of, moved out of it a bit, yeah, because they've become much bigger; you know, they've become, sort of, asset rich, you know, scaled up and get the money, yeah, and monopolise grant. Okay? **So what's happened is the housing associations have moved away from this, sort of, community-led housing space, yeah? And so what's happened is that's become emptied by them moving away.** My main interest is mobilising people to make use of empty properties, but mainly to get hold of housing, be they refugees, single people, homeless people, young people, anyone who hasn't got access to housing. And this is what happened in housing associations going back to the beginning but now takes place through community-led housing. (Expert Interview 2013)*

# Action: How Opportunities are created through Social Skill and Context Shaping



# Building Alliances and Forming Peaks

## Mutual Housing Group

- Loose alliance bringing together interests of five networks and peaks
- Sharing practice and experience
- Jointly promoting sectors and producing options maps for emerging groups
- Occupying and shaping spaces once filled by Housing Associations
- Space in which community-led groups can grow
- Self-build widens the agenda and connects with widespread dissatisfaction with housebuilding industry – community self-building a small element of growing custom build

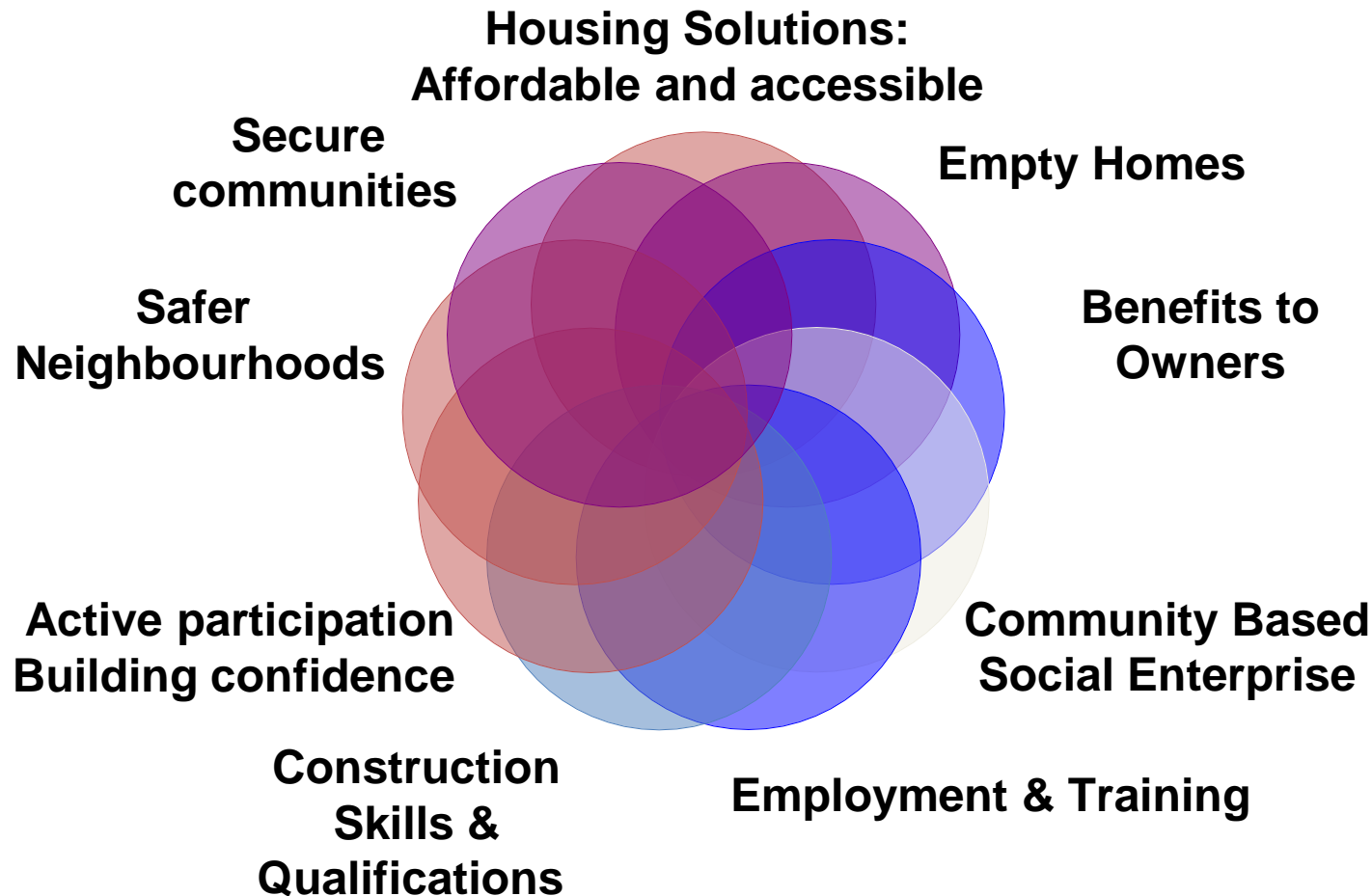


# What are the most significant advantages of community-led housing?

- Providing access to decent, secure, affordable homes
- Social integration (probe on social exclusivity of different forms of community led housing)
- Benefits arising from participation
- Wider choices
- Small scale (but can be larger – US CLTS up to 2500 homes, Mutual Social Landlords up to 10,000)
- Legitimacy and overcoming NIMBYism

“community-led housing - it’s particularly about winning support from a parish council and trying to reduce opposition which might emerge from within the community without some form of engagement. So it seems like a natural progression almost from the rural exception site schemes” (case study interviewee 2013)

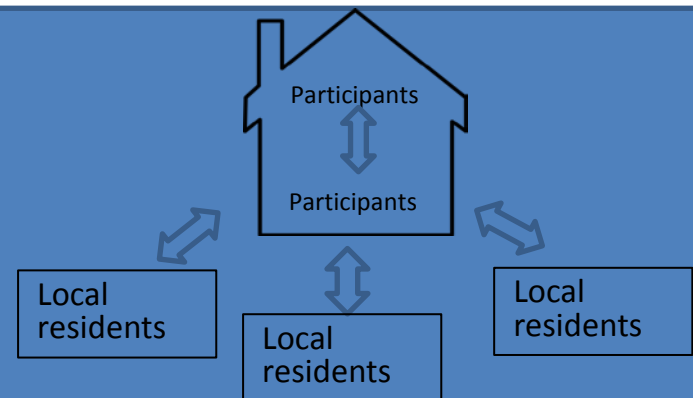
# Self-help housing: Multiple benefits beyond housing



# What are the main drivers for people to engage in community led housing?

- Dissatisfaction with existing choices (volume house building, big social housing, private rental)
- Lack of affordability of existing choices
- Ability to solve own housing problems (but takes time!)
- Commitment to collective/participative solutions
- Knowing people already involved

Engagement can be as supporters  
or as prospective resident/participants



### 3. Scaling- up why and how?

- From niche product to mass product?
- From small scale schemes to large scale schemes?
- By replication and information sharing (viral approach)
- By increasing scale of organisations but keeping schemes at a liveable level
- By setting targets for LAs, Planners, HAs etc to stimulate invention?

We need to scale up our ambitions and aspirations for the sector considerably. We should set a target of developing 20,000 homes per year, and aim to hit that target within 20 years : Sector leaders 2014



# Scaling-up need not imply larger scale communities

- If community-led housing is reaction to dysfunctionality need to avoid recreating the monster !
- This means careful thought to acceptable models for scaling-up
  - Going viral
  - Avoid simply franchising existing models
  - Support not direction from secondaries/enablers
  - Accountable multi-level governance



# Barriers to scaling-up

- Lack of institutional support/enabling frameworks
  - Governmental support
  - Absence of a Policy framework
  - Limited external enabling
- Land/sites
  - **Perhaps the biggest barrier for new build underlying affordability**
- Finance
  - Realistic public funding time scales
  - Understanding and support in lenders marketplace
- Public Awareness: effective consumer demand
  - Lack of wider recognition in society of potential value (seen as a ‘hippy-dippy’ alternative lifestyle not mainstream)
  - Media coverage e.g. Grand Designs/Great British Property Scandal may help to address.
  - Familiarity through ‘mushrooming’ of sector might address more directly
  - Self-build sector can demonstrate demand now

perhaps the biggest problem our sector faces is that community-led housing is not known generally as a housing option by the public. The only way that we can change this is by there being community-led housing schemes mushrooming all over the country. Sector leaders 2014

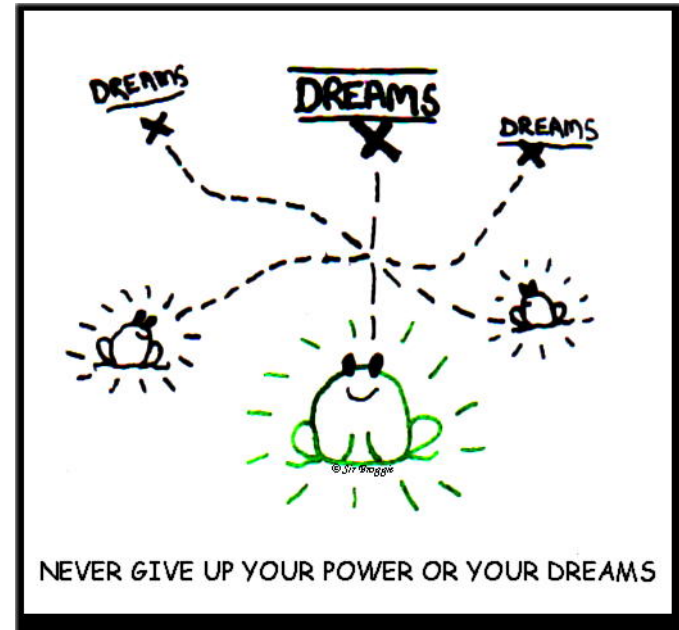
# Short Cuts to Scaling-Up (1)

**Devolved management within the 2 million home housing association-led sector:**

- Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) largely confined to LA sector but a few HA groups now considering similar models

**Collaborative partnering by HAs with community-led groups:**

- Sharing knowledge and power
- Commissioning services from community-led groups (local management, repairs, community services etc)



*We don't advocate that housing associations break up into Tenant Management Organisations and that would be quite localist, but we advocate that housing associations think about the impact they have upon the localities in which they work and as part of that we advocate that they do support, [...] organisations, like self-help housing projects [...] like community land trusts.” (External consultant)*

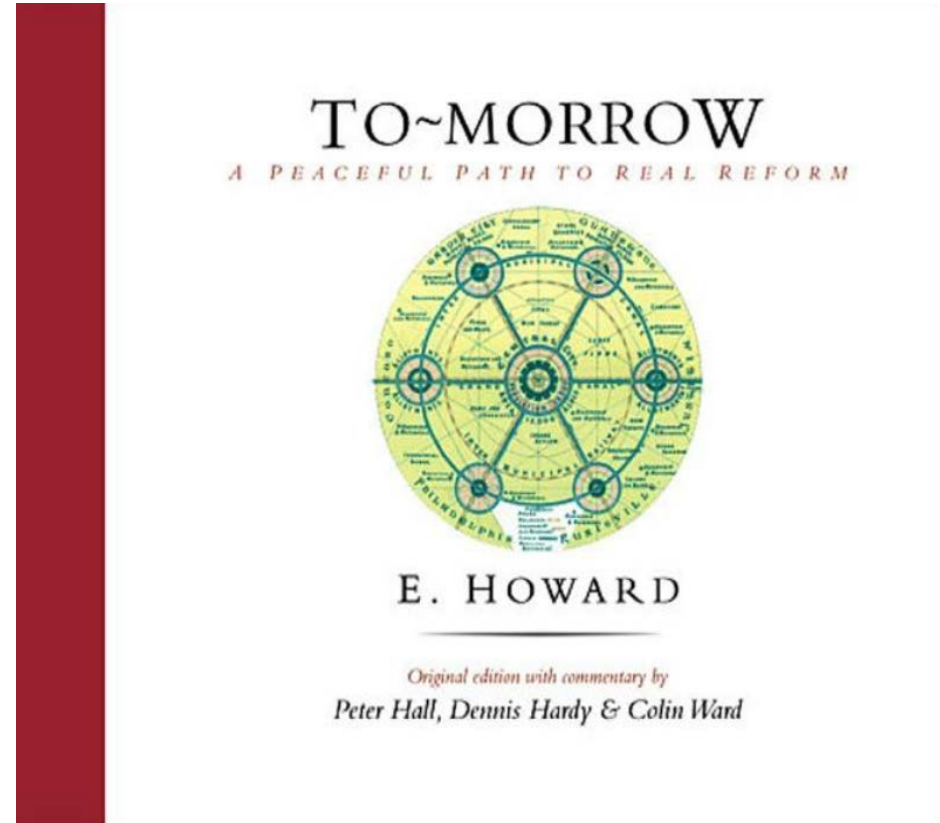
# Short-Cuts to Scaling-up (2)

## Capitalise on Supply initiatives for diversifying home-ownership sector

- UK Gov belatedly supporting self-build
- Include parcels for community self-build in land release
- Mix with community-led social housing models
- Aim for balanced social mix as in original garden cities

## Remember Ebenezer's Principles

- Strong vision, leadership and community engagement
- Land value capture for the benefit of the community
- Community ownership of land and long-term stewardship of assets
- Mixed-tenure homes and housing types that are adorable for ordinary people
- Beautifully and imaginatively designed homes with gardens in healthy communities



# Learning from HA sector history?

- Role played by NFHA and HC (flower pot men) in initial promotion of HA sector
- Role of social skill and alliance building
- Role of early public subsidy in building capacity for cross-subsidy later as sector matured
- Loss of community-led identity and spaces into which new forms of organisation now expanding
- Avoiding the downsides of scaling up?



# **Some elements of good enabling frameworks for community-led housing?**

- Berlin Airport – 30% land release to community-led groups in major urban growth project
- Vienna Developer Competitions- Social sustainability part of criteria for land and subsidy
- Wales Assembly- targets and enabling approach to small and large scale mutuals
- Devolution from within – Accord Housing Group

# Over to You

From Australian Perspective:

- How relevant are community-led solutions to the housing problem?
- What are the best examples of community-led housing such as CLTs and co-housing?
- What are the most significant advantages of community-led housing?
- What are the most significant barriers to scaling up community-led housing in Australia?
- What are the characteristics of good enabling frameworks – success examples?

# References and Credits

- Bunker, S. Coates, C. Field, M. and How, J. (2011) Cohousing in Britain. A Diggers & Dreamers Review: London, Edge of Time. [www.diggersanddreamers.org.uk](http://www.diggersanddreamers.org.uk)
- CCH, Commission on Co-operative Housing (2009) Report of the Commission on Co-operative & Mutual Housing, Available at <http://www.ccmh.coop/sites/default/files/Commission%20Report.pdf>.
- Crabtree, L. Phibbs, P. Milligan, V. and Blundell, H (2012) Principles and practices of an affordable housing community land trust model.  
Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute UNSW-UWS Research Centre
- Community Campus 87 (2012) Celebrating 25 years of providing housing, support and training to disadvantaged young people across Teeside. Stockton on Tees.  
[www.Communitycampus87.co.uk](http://www.Communitycampus87.co.uk)
- Fligstein, N. and McAdam, D. (2012) A theory of fields. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gooding, J. (2013) An investigation into the potential of community-led initiatives, including CLTs, as an approach to regenerate older or other housing areas experiencing decline or lack of investment. Tees Valley Unlimited.
- Gulliver, K., Handy, C. and Morris, J. (2013) More than Markets: Mutual & Co-operative Housing in the UK. Birmingham: Human City Institute.
- HCA (The Homes and Communities Agency) (2013) Community-led Development: Eligibility Criteria. [www.pafhiv.org.uk/pdf\\_files/community\\_led\\_eligibility.pdf](http://www.pafhiv.org.uk/pdf_files/community_led_eligibility.pdf).
- Id22 (2012) Co-housing Cultures. Berlin: Jovis
- .



# References and Credits

- Lang, R. and Mullins, D. (2014) Bringing real localism into practice through co-operative housing governance. The role and prospects for community-led housing in England. University of Birmingham. Housing and Communities Research Group
- Lang, R. and Novy, A. (2013) Co-operative Housing and Social Cohesion: The Role of Linking Social Capital. European Planning Studies, DOI:10.1080/09654313.2013.800025.
- Mansbridge A (1934) Brick on Brick. Co-operative Permanent Building Society 1884-1934. London: Dent.
- Moore, T. and McKee, K. (2012) Empowering Local Communities: An international review of community land trusts, Housing Studies, 27, 1, 280-290.
- Moore, T. and Mullins, D. (2013) Scaling-up or going viral? Comparing self-help housing and community land trust facilitation. Voluntary Sector Review, 4(3), 333-353.
- Mullins, D., Jones, P. & Teasdale, S. (2011). Self-help housing – Towards a greater role. TSRC Working Paper 54, Birmingham: TSRC.
- Mullins, D and Sacranie, H. (2014) Evaluation of the Empty Homes Community Grants Programme (EHCGP) - Midlands region. Baseline Case Studies Report. University of Birmingham. Mullins, D. and Sacranie, H. (2014)
- Scollay, M. (2012) Lalor. The Peter Lalor Home Building Co-operative 1946-2102. Sydney, UNSW Press.
- Wallace, A. Ford, J and Quilgars, D. (2013) Build-it-yourself? Understanding the changing landscape. University of York and Lloyds Banking Group.

Thanks to Richard Lang, Tom Moore, Jon Fitzmaurice, Nic Bliss, Catherine Harrington, Jon Stevens, Thomas Knorr-Siedow for useful conversations in preparing this presentation