

exchange



THE PLACE OF INHABITANTS

RESIDENTS' PARTICIPATION IN CREATING
SUSTAINABLE HOUSING & NEIGHBOURHOODS



Special Edition May 2011



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INTRODUCTION

This report presents some preliminary findings from a study which the Observatory is carrying out thanks to the initiative of, and in cooperation with, the French federation Union Sociale pour l'Habitat. The aim of this practice-oriented study, which will be finalised in the autumn 2011, is to learn about how social housing providers are involving their tenants and residents in providing services, what is the role of residents and how to put them at the centre of our work. **Our long-term vision is that the delivery of housing policies processes should be transformed, so that the interest of people is at the centre of the decision making, and that people who will benefit from it are fully participating in their development.**

In this publication we present different approaches to residents' involvement and participation in the housing sector in 5 EU countries, concentrating first on the regulatory framework which defines the 'rules of the game' in this field.

Most importantly, in the second part we present concrete examples which illustrate the commitment by different actors in the housing field (social housing providers as well as public authorities) towards increasing residents' participation, in the belief that this is the way forward if we want to achieve better services, and socially, economically and environmentally sustainable neighbourhoods.

Finally, in the third part we consider some of the models which imply a higher degree of resident involvement through various forms of co-ownership and self-help, such as housing cooperatives, co-housing, community land trusts and similar initiatives.

Users' involvement in the delivery of services: a key element of quality services and good governance

The Social Protection Committee (SPC) adopted in October 2010 a **Voluntary European Quality Framework for Social Services***. This is a set of guidelines that aims to develop a common understanding of the quality of social services within the EU. It serves as a reference for public authorities to improve the quality of these services.

The Framework includes **quality principles for the relationships between service providers and users**, such as respect for users' rights, and participation and empowerment. In particular, service providers should 'encourage the active involvement of the users, and, when appropriate, of their families or trusted persons and of their informal carers in the decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of services. The service provision should empower users to define their personal needs and should aim to strengthen or maintain their capacities while retaining as much control as possible over their own lives.'

It also refers to **quality principles for the relationships between service providers, public authorities, social partners and other stakeholders**, encouraging partnership and cooperation of all stakeholders as well as openness and transparency as the basis for good governance.

Involving residents in delivering quality housing and sustainable neighbourhoods: how can Europe help?

Involving inhabitants in decision-making and delivery of social housing, as the examples in this report show, help ensuring long term sustainability by increasing residents' satisfaction with services, increasing quality of the homes and surrounding environment, enhancing relationships among neighbours and creating a sense of pride and belonging to the local community. Furthermore, the experience shows that the success of housing and urban policies is a matter of democracy. Like other public policies, social acceptance is crucial and resources and time should be dedicated to build up this acceptance. Residents' participation can lead to significant reduction of costs on the long term, but to be sustained it requires constant investment in a number of areas such as training, staff, and information campaigns just to mention a few. All these initiatives are in most cases carried out by housing providers out of their own budget without specific financial support. Out of the 14 projects presented in this report, two were supported by European funding, with very positive results. Namely, in the case of Telge Hovsjö in Sweden the new cultural centre received 32 million in project funds from the European Social Fund (representing about 40% of total costs), while the 'solidarity housing' pilot project in Bilbao was partly funded by the territorial cooperation project REHABITAT, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

We believe that **Structural Funds should contribute to empowering residents and improving local governance. Participation of residents should not only be criteria or conditions for the use of Structural Funds, it should be a priority per se of cohesion policy.**

* The Social Protection Committee, A Voluntary European Framework for Social Services, SPC/2010/10/8



There is a trend across Europe towards more user involvement in the provision of the services. Measures for user involvement are triggered by national policies and/or through proactive local initiatives. With regard to social housing, residents' involvement practices result from a mix of organisational culture of providers, regulation, and relationships with unions and associations of tenants or residents.

For instance, the Swedish Union of Tenants' activities include the annual negotiations of rents as well as lobbying activities to strengthen the position of tenants and their security of tenure.

In the UK, tenant and residents' associations are involved through consultation processes and needs analyses within the local community.

In the Netherlands, tenants/users sit in panels that mainly decide over maintenance issues. When additional support is needed, users have a say in issues ranging from practical matters to policy issues.

In Denmark, the principle of tenants' democracy establishes an active role for tenants in the management of housing associations and in the day-to-day running of housing estates.

In France, residents involvement in social housing has become increasingly important over the last 10 years since the 2000 Law on Solidarity and Urban Renewal obliges landlords to develop a rental co-decision plan together with tenants representatives. Participation of inhabitants is also inscribed in the increasing commitment by Hlm providers towards users satisfaction and delivery of quality services.

We will look at these examples in details in the following pages.

In other countries, such as Italy and Spain approaches are scattered and experimental and based on the initiative of local authorities and providers: in the lack of a 'framework' for residents' involvement in these countries, we nevertheless include some innovative examples at the local level in the second part of this report.



1.1 DENMARK

CONTEXT: SOCIAL HOUSING IN DENMARK

In Denmark social housing (or, more specifically, not for profit housing) consists of housing for rent provided at cost prices by not for profit housing associations. Currently it makes up about 20% of the total housing stock in the country. There are about 700 housing associations, which own 8,000 estates, also defined 'sections'. Since the turn of the century, social housing associations have been semi-autonomous bodies, economically subsidised and legally regulated by the state, but owned and organised collectively by the association members themselves. Since 1984, tenants have had the right to the majority of seats on housing association boards. Tenants also contribute to financing the production of social housing in Denmark, as 2% of the cost of a project is financed by tenants' deposits.

TENANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN DENMARK: THE PRINCIPLE OF TENANTS' DEMOCRACY

A key feature of social housing in Denmark has indeed always been the high degree of tenant involvement, and the legal framework for tenant democracy in the running of estates and associations has its roots in the beginning of the 20th century. The main feature of the Danish social housing model is still nowadays the principle of tenants' democracy, defined by law (Law on Tenants Democracy, 1984). **Tenants' democracy is basically a way to organise the running of each housing estate based on the central role played by residents.** Furthermore, the relationship between landlord and customer as well as management and administration are currently regulated through the Act on Social Housing (lov om almene boliger m.v., jf. lovbekendtgørelse nr. 103 af 11. February 2011).

HOW IT WORKS?

At the national level

The 700 housing associations are members of a national interest organisation: The National Federation of Non-Profit Housing Associations, *Boligselskabernes Landsforening* (BL). BL has a long track record of influencing housing and participating in the formulation of programmes and policies and it is also involved in organising training for staff and residents¹.

Tenants' democracy requires a high level of mobilisation and education, so the social housing sector has ongoing educational programmes for the residents in relation to the tenants' democracy. Courses are organized for instance on housing policy and financing, asset management techniques, choices and constraints on rehabilitation. These courses are open to company employees and tenants, and are organized by BL, which has a dedicated training facility. Furthermore each tenant is invited to attend regular information sessions.

At the level of the housing association

Housing associations (consisting of one or more estates) are typically run by an eleven-member board, out of which the majority are tenants. Non-tenant board members are often representatives of employees, the local municipal council or special experts. The housing association boards are usually elected at a general meeting of all tenants or of all members of estate boards in the association.

At the level of housing estates

Tenants' democracy essentially has to do with the running of the estate, i.e. having a sound residence and a well-functioning housing section². Each housing estate or section is run by an Estate Board composed entirely by tenants (usually five), which is responsible for decisions on maintenance, approval of the budget, improvements and repairs, house rules, running of common rooms, social initiatives and leisure activities. Some of the larger housing estates operate with sub-area boards as well as a main board having the budgetary control of the whole estate. The budget and other decisions which affect rents are approved by a general meeting.

Overall, more than 20,000 tenants hold an elected post; in addition volunteers participate in special activities and committees. A 1999 study showed that around one third of tenants participate in the general meeting at their estate. An informed estimate is that 5% of the residents are active in the tenants' democracy as board members, 10% work on special committees, and 33% participate in the annual meeting of their estate. In addition to this the committees arrange so called common working days

for cleaning up the grounds, fixing playgrounds, planting, pruning etc.³ The volunteer work is significant in the sense that it makes the residents take ownership to the dwelling as well as the estate and in this way improve the quality of the housing service for all residents. A personal estimate is that the tenants perform 10% of the work⁴.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Today the main challenges for the social housing sector and for tenants' participation are social and ethnic segregation of some social housing estates. Social housing in Denmark used to be considered a tenure for all, and in general there is still no stigma attached to living in social housing. In the 1940s and 1950s, social housing consisted of small, centrally-located estates. From the 1960s to the end of the 1970s, larger estates, often with high-rise buildings, were constructed on the outskirts of cities. Many of these estates now have social problems⁵. Furthermore, there is a decline in participation and a need for generational change among 'tenant democrats'. The trend towards centralisation, with larger municipalities and mergers of housing associations, is also posing some problems as giving residents renewed possibilities to enhance the quality of life where they live becomes a more acute challenge⁶.

CONCLUSIONS

Danish not for profit housing associations, which are a legacy of the widespread cooperative movement that started in the mid-nineteenth century in Denmark, have always been characterised by a high level of tenants control and participation. The Danes are proud of tenant democracy, and the influence of local tenants through budget control, general meetings and estate boards is taken for granted. All in all, tenant democracy is valued as a national treasure and the boards have in recent years gained new importance as partners in regeneration projects. When this partnership works it leads to better quality of life and development possibilities for residents⁷.

NOTES

1. Sacanlon and Vestergaard (2007)
2. Engberg (2009)
3. Figures gestimated by Lars A. Engberg, SBI (lae@sbi.dk), 2010
4. Vestergaard (2004)
5. Engberg (2009)
6. Vestergaard (2004)
7. Vestergaard (2004)
8. Malpass and Victory (2009)



CONTEXT: SOCIAL HOUSING IN ENGLAND

Social housing in England is provided both by local authorities and by independent, not-for-profit organisations which are generally referred to as ‘housing associations’. In 2000 a stock transfer programme that started in 1989 was accelerated by the introduction of the ‘decent home standard’, a standard all social housing had to comply to by 2010, encouraging transfer of local authority homes to existing or new housing associations. The reduction of council house building to virtually nothing, combined with sale to sitting tenants and the transfer of over one million council dwellings to housing associations between 1988 and 2009 have meant housing associations are now the majority delivery vehicle for affordable housing in England. They own about 54% of social housing, against approximately 46% which is owned by local authorities which manage it directly or through arm’s-length management organisations (ALMOs) Currently social housing accounts for about 18% of the total homes in England.

A SHORT HISTORY OF TENANTS’ PARTICIPATION IN ENGLAND

Interest in what was then referred to as tenant participation began to grow in the early 1970s and a Council Tenants Charter was drawn up by activists in London in 1970, a decade before the idea was incorporated in the Housing Act, 1980 (Craddock, 1975:3-4). In the beginning participation was largely about council tenants organising to articulate demands in the face of unresponsive councillors and officials⁹. From the late-1960s and early-1970s, some housing departments in London showed a genuine interest in developing tenant-participation schemes, and by 1975 46 local authorities had implemented such schemes. As responsibility for social housing was shifted from local authorities to other non-profit-making organizations such as housing associations, increased tenant rights were protected as central-government legislation and finance often demanded greater levels of consultation⁹. Different regulatory framework led to some extent to different tradition of residents’ involvement for local authorities and housing associations. The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG), the regulatory body for local authorities and ALMOs, focused on tenant participation compacts – collective agreements between local authorities and their tenants. The emphasis here, therefore, has been on developing collective approaches, having a clear document and action plan

with defined standards, and focusing on tenant input to decision making rather than effective service delivery. The CLG research into tenant compacts found that they had provided a basic bottom-line standard for involvement rather than a real pressure to improve services. Housing associations have had a rather different approach. The Housing Corporation, the former regulator for housing associations, emphasised that associations must: seek and be responsive to residents’ views and priorities; reflect these interests in their business strategies; give residents and other stakeholders opportunities to comment on their performance; enable residents to play their part in decision making. Both sectors, however, have been subject to inspection by the Audit Commission, which has developed a Key Lines of Enquiry (KLoE) approach to tenant involvement. This KLoE contains a considerable amount of description as to what an ‘excellent’ and a ‘fair’ service might look like in respect of tenant involvement¹⁰.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The legal framework for social housing is to be found in the **Housing and Regeneration Act 2008**. Among other measures, the Act establishes the **Tenants Services Authority (TSA)** as regulatory body for social housing (both local authorities and housing associations, since 2010). The TSA established 6 areas of performance on which social landlords are obliged to report, including ‘Tenant involvement and empowerment’.

HOW IT WORKS?

At the national level

As mentioned above, today social housing providers are regulated by the Tenants Services Authority. As a regulator the TSA aims to be more tenant-focussed than its predecessor, the Housing Corporation. In addition, the TSA is committed to co-regulation, by which HAs can undertake significant elements of self-regulation with heightened tenant involvement. The TSA has six standards covering the full range of social housing activity. One of them is the **standard on ‘Tenant involvement and empowerment’**, requiring HAs to: ‘provide choices, information and communication that are appropriate to the diverse needs of their tenants in the delivery of all standards’, and to ‘have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple, and accessible that ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly.’¹¹

Within this general framework there is a strong focus on tenants, as providers are expected to work with their tenants to develop local standards. Providers must report annually on their performance, and are expected to offer residents the opportunity to get involved in scrutiny of performance.

Also the process leading to the establishment of the TSA standards was participatory: it involved two rounds of consultation with social tenants and landlords, or ‘National Conversation’. During this process, 27,000 tenants were involved making it the largest tenant consultation to be undertaken in England (e.g. this included over 24,000 questionnaires).

At the level of housing association

Concretely, housing associations implement a variety of different mechanisms and initiatives to involve their tenants in the work of the association at all levels. Many HAs have well-developed mechanisms **for bringing tenants together for consultation and to represent them on their management boards**, as illustrated by the examples in this report.

Furthermore, in the absence of market signals, providers and the regulator are increasingly trying to find mechanisms that record the effectiveness of service delivery and how far these service levels meet customer expectations. This is evidenced by the establishment of call centres and one-stop shops, and an interest in the approach of retailers to obtaining and acting on customer feedback information. This feedback is generally elicited through **customer surveys, focus groups and workshops**¹².

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The new Coalition Government announced in 2010 major changes to the statutory and regulatory environment in which housing associations operate. These changes are designed to give effect to the new investment framework for social housing, as announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review on 22 October 2010. They also incorporate the abolition of the current regulator, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA). A special regulatory committee of the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) will take over the TSA’s functions, which will be rebalanced so that the regulator is less involved in consumer protection, whilst maintaining financial regulation. It puts the emphasis on local scrutiny of performance, with a much greater reliance on responding effectively to complaints. The report envisages that tenant panels are likely to play a key part in delivering effective local scrutiny both of complaints and of performance more generally. It will be for each landlord to work with its tenants to constitute a panel (or other scrutiny structure) in whatever way they think most appropriate¹³. The statutory changes will be

embodied in the Localism Bill, which is expected to pass through Parliament during 2011 and to take effect on 1 April 2012. Meanwhile the TSA’s regulatory framework remains in place.

CONCLUSIONS

The combination of regulatory expectation and the impact of inspection have been central to driving the evolution in tenant involvement in social housing in England. Nevertheless, it is also important to recognise that organisational drivers are also encouraging organisations to be more responsive to their tenants’ views. Some housing associations were set up on the specific basis of its tenants being members of the organisation and driving a community-focused agenda. Other large scale voluntary transfer (LSVT) associations have developed tenant involvement on the basis of the need to gain tenant approval for stock transfer and to consult them on the subsequent improvement programmes. In general, tenant and residents involvement is a vital and vibrant part of what housing associations do. The Citizenship Survey showed that 76% of people feel it is important that they can influence decisions in their communities¹⁴. HA tenant satisfaction with their landlord tends to be higher than for local authorities, with 80% of HA tenants are very satisfied or fairly satisfied with their properties against 76% for tenants of local authorities¹⁵.

NOTES

- 9. Shapely, Peter (2008)
- 10. Tenants Services Authority (2010)
- 11. Audit Commission (2004)
- 12. Tenants Services Authority (2010)
- 13. National Housing Federation (2010)
- 14. Communities and local government (2010)
- 15. Audit Commission (2004)



CONTEXT: SOCIAL HOUSING IN FRANCE

Social housing provision in France is housing provided by 'HLM' organisations, which are the specific actors created by the state or registered as HLM by the state to fulfil this specific mission of general interest (where HLM stands for Habitation à Loyer Modéré –organisations providing housing at moderated rents). The social housing sector in France accounts for about 17% of the stock. It is a specific sector of the housing market, which is governed by legislative and regulatory provisions, separate from common law and regulated by the Construction and Housing Code (Le Code de la Construction et de l'Habitation, CCH).

TENANTS' PARTICIPATION IN FRANCE

At the national level

The CNC (Commission Nationale de Concertation, National Consultation Committee) was created in 1986 by the so-called 'Loi Mehaignerie'. Its mission is to contribute to improving relations between landlords and tenants, through studies, opinions and proposals. It may conclude collective agreements in the rental sector on different issues (such as for instance the increase of charges, amelioration and maintenance of dwellings and collective spaces, etc.). The agreements signed by CNC are published on the Official Journal and they can be extended by decree to the whole rental sector concerned. It comprises representatives from organisations of landlords and the five tenants unions, together with the Union Sociale pour l'Habitat (USH), the National Union of family associations, the association of Majors, the national agency for information on housing, and the national housing agency.

The ICN (Instance de Concertation Nationale avec les Habitants, National Authority for consultation of inhabitants) was created in 2005 (it replaced the mixed commission Hlm-inhabitants created in 1975). It comprises 5 national organisations representing tenants, HLM federations and the federation of regional HLM associations (FNAR). ICN is a place for information, consultation and debate, preparing negotiations which happen within the CNC. In 2008-2009 the ICN prepared a national agreement on the implementation of Grenelle de l'Environnement. The authority works on the residential path of Hlm tenants, quality of the service and on consultation on construction/demolition works.

At the level of social housing providers

Many HLM organizations have set up customer service mechanisms (treatment and response to complaints, inquiries, 24 hours call centres, specific staff in charge of relations with residents...). They have made commitments on quality of service (service charter, certification...) and establish contracts and agreements with inhabitants on a range of issues (quality of service charters, local rental agreements, neighborhood agreements).

Some housing organisations have established representatives of residents at the level of building or estate (neighborhood advisory councils, delegates stairwell, people relay...), elected or not.

Furthermore, most organizations support initiatives of grassroots organizations and foster the presence of associations of service delivery (home care for seniors, literacy...). The general objectives are:

- Improve the quality of life and enhance the site
- Contribute to the development of good neighborhood relations
- Improve the quality of service (recognition of the competence inhabitants have as service users and their ability to identify problems).

Tenants-administrators sit on the Board of Directors of Hlm organizations with the right to vote. They have the same powers and duties as other directors. They are elected by all tenants. The participation rate varies between 20 and 28%. Elections are held every four years. Furthermore, at least one tenant-administrator sits in the commission in charge of the allocation of dwellings.

The so-called SRU law (solidarite et renouvellement urbain, law on solidarity and urban renewal) of 13 December 2000 requires landlords to develop a rental co-decision plan (plan de concertation locative) together with tenants representatives, covering all their housing stock. This plan sets out practical arrangements for consultation and advice and establishes one or more rental co-decision councils (conseils de concertation locative). It provides for material and financial resources allocated to tenant representatives to perform their duties.

An evaluation of the functioning of these councils was carried out in 2009. For 61% of organizations responding to the survey, the councils have resulted in concrete actions or projects on a variety of topics, including issues related to innovation in the sector (Convention Social Utility, SLS...). Charges and quality of services are the most frequently discussed issues in the consultation councils.

As for consultation on works, an additional co-decision mechanism for social housing has been set up by the SRU law, applying to all works affecting the rents or charges and to construction-demolition works¹⁶.

CONCLUSIONS

A recent enquiry on the implementation of rental co-decision plans by HLM providers, carried out by USH in 2009, shows positive results. Beyond the legal obligation, it seems that consultation councils have been well integrated within the functioning of social housing organisations and constitute real arenas for co-decision, although this practice has yet to be consolidated for a significant number of social housing providers¹⁷.

NOTES

16. L'Union Sociale pour l'Habitat (2010)
 17. Kamoun, Patrick and Roudnitzky, Christine (2010). Bilan des plans de concertation locative. In *Habitat et Société*, June 2010 n° 58





CONTEXT: SOCIAL HOUSING IN THE NETHERLANDS

Registered social housing organisations in the Netherlands (Woningcorporaties) are private non-profit organisations with a legal task to give priority to housing households on lower incomes. They operate on the basis of a registration and are supervised by the national government. They constitute a quite specific characteristic of Dutch housing in comparison with other countries in terms of their share of the total housing stock: **they own, rent-out and manage about one-third of the total housing stock, and some 75% of the total rental stock.** Although housing associations work within a legal framework set up by the State, they are independent organisations, setting their own objectives and bearing their own financial responsibilities. Indeed the social housing sector in the Netherlands is financially independent of central government since the so-called Bruterling (or 'balancing-out') agreement in 1993 between the State and the national federations of social housing organisations.

A SHORT HISTORY OF TENANTS' PARTICIPATION IN THE NETHERLANDS

Individual tenants in the Netherlands were and still are today strongly protected vis-a-vis their landlords, since the Housing Act of 1901. The White paper on Housing (ministry of VROM, 1988) stated for the first time that tenant-landlord consultations (or 'deliberations') were to take place, on the basis of equality.

At the beginning of the nineties, social housing organisations became financially independent from the government and started to gradually expand their activity outside the traditional scope of building and letting of dwellings. The relationship between tenant and landlord became more business-like, and at the same time it was generally felt that in this new situation housing organisations were in need of a framework for accountability towards not only their tenants, but also their stakeholders and the society in general¹⁸. The introduction of the Rules Governing the Social Rented Sector (Besluit Beheer Sociale Huursector, BBSH, 1993) strengthened the formal position of the tenants living in social housing. Furthermore, the Labour Party introduced a Bill in Parliament in 1995 aimed at regulating the interactions between landlords and tenants. The bill ultimately resulted in the Act on tenant-Landlord deliberation which came into force in December 1998 (latest revision: 2009). It establishes the

right to give advice by tenants' organisations on a number of subjects. Tenants' organisations can claim financial support from their landlord to implement participation.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR TENANT'S PARTICIPATION IN THE NETHERLANDS

- **Dutch Housing Act** (1901)
- **Rules Governing the Social Rented Sector** (Besluit Beheer Sociale Huursector, BBSH, 1993)
- **Act on Landlord Tenant Consultation** (latest revision in 2009)

HOW IT WORKS?

As mentioned above, there are different measures applied (in the whole rental sector, in the social rental sector, or by single housing associations), voluntary and compulsory, and implying different 'degrees' of participation.

Use of tenant satisfaction surveys and similar Market analysis and research, tenant satisfaction questionnaires are often adopted from the commercial world.

Possibility to post complaints

According to the Rules governing the Social rented Sector (article 16) each registered social housing organisation must have a complaints committee. This is open to complaints by individual tenants.

Obligation to consult tenants

The Tenant Participation Act (Overlegwet Huurders/Verhuurders) provides residents with the possibility to influence policies and actions of housing associations. There are tenant committees that consult with the staff of housing associations on daily issues connected with individual homes or a complex. And there is a co-ordinating tenants' or residents' board that consults with the management of the association about broader policy issues, such as rent policy, maintenance policy and demolition or sales policy. However, the law mainly grants tenants an advisory role.

Participation covenants

Landlords and tenants are free to agree on further-reaching forms of participation than those established by the Tenant Participation Act: for instance in recent years many housing associations have drawn up participation covenants with their tenant organisations¹⁹.

The vast majority of registered social housing organisations have agreed on such conventions with their local tenants organisations.

Moreover, within their housing management, housing associations have developed a wide variety of **demand driven housing management initiatives** and focus on stimulating choice, voice and power for the tenants in general. According to a survey on demand-driven housing management initiatives among housing associations²⁰, initiatives based on a collective process (i.e. where the establishment of a result is a collective effort and effects more people than one individual tenant) can be found by about 4% of the Dutch housing associations. Examples are the involvement of tenant teams in designing dwellings and restructuring areas. Initiatives supporting participation on an individual level are much more widespread: 49% of all the housing associations in the Netherlands give their tenants freedom of choice when renewing kitchens, bathrooms and floor plans when renovating the dwelling. If we are to separate new development from renovation we find 42% in new developments and 54% in renovation.

Residents involvement in management of the organisation

From 1 July 2002 the Rules Governing the Social Rented Sector were changed so that tenants and/or their representative organisations may make a binding nomination for two vacant seats in the Board or the Supervisory Board of housing associations (BBSH, article 7 lid 1 sub e).

Monitoring and reporting on residents participation

Under the BBSH, the corporations are obliged to provide the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment with an annual housing report on their performances in six areas. They include, amongst others, the task to 'involve tenants in the policy and management of the organisation'. At the end of each year, the housing associations must indicate in their annual reports what they have achieved in these performance areas.

Furthermore, an example of self-regulation with regards to tenants participation and its monitoring is the so called **AEDES Code**, which since 2007 is the governance code of housing association member of the Dutch federation AEDES (bringing together over 90% of social housing organisations in the country). This code is the result of broad discussions within and outside the association, including tenant organisations as well as, among others, several organisations for local communities and health care. It contains mutual values and standards applying to the social housing sector. The AEDES Code (Art. 3) emphasises the importance of clients in housing

associations and states that housing associations must operate a participation policy and actively involve residents 'in working to create vital centres, districts and neighbourhoods and in the development of our products and services'. According to the Code, AEDES members must account for the application of the Code each year in their annual report, and undergo inspection every four years. Although the AedesCode is not legally binding, it is compulsory for HAs members of AEDES to comply with it. If the housing association fails to meet the requirements of the Aedes Code any person with a reasonable and direct interest may submit a complaint to the Aedes Code commission, which in turn can recommend mediation or the imposition of one of the sanctions set out in the statutes/rules of procedure.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

As mentioned above, since the 1990's housing associations in the Netherlands have operated in an increasingly entrepreneurial way and have been allowed to do so. During this period, from an economic point of view, social housing organisations have gained considerable strength. Social housing organisations could be seen fulfilling all kinds of tasks directly or indirectly related to their original role in housing people. Over the last few years there has been a shift in the public authorities' approach vis-à-vis social housing organisations, with a tendency back towards more public control. Furthermore, the scope of their activities and the system of supervision as a whole is currently subject to political discussion.

CONCLUSIONS

There is a strong tradition of tenants' protection in the Netherlands, with legal obligations for landlords to consult with their tenants on a number of issues. Besides legally binding obligations, over the last 10 years housing associations have increasingly further committed to enhance tenants involvement both through the AEDES code of conduct, a self-regulation tool which applies to all members of the national federation of HA (AEDES), as well as individually through participation covenants and/or by adopting demand driven management tools.

NOTES

18. From 'Dutch social housing in a nutshell'
19. Kruijthoff, 2008
20. Zijlstra, 2010



CONTEXT: THE HOUSING SYSTEM IN SWEDEN

Sweden is characterised by a model of housing provision which builds into market processes important social goals²¹. "This 'third way' became a defining characteristic of the Swedish Social Democrats in their construction of Sweden's post-war welfare state."²² The whole concept and the term "Social Housing" is not applicable to Sweden. **Despite the absence of a social housing sector in Sweden, local councils are nevertheless responsible to ensure access to housing for all citizens, and to fulfil this task they have established municipal housing companies which have a responsibility to take on all kinds of tenants.** They are represented at the national level by SABO (the Swedish Association of Municipal Housing Companies).

The housing market in Sweden is divided in four main sectors, namely Owner Occupied homes (about 41%), Tenant Ownership, a specific kind of housing co-operatives in Sweden which we'll explain more in details later on (22%), private rented housing (19 %) and public rented housing (18%). Prices for the Owner occupied houses and Tenant Ownership (co-operative) dwellings are set on the free market, while in the rented sector there is a rent control system. Furthermore, there are housing allowances to help poor tenants with paying the rent.

HISTORY OF RESIDENTS' PARTICIPATION

The inception of housing policy in Sweden occurred in the mid-1940s, with support for a range of housing options through tenure-neutral preferential-loan subsidies. This has allowed **a strong tenant ownership co-operative sector (TOCS) as well as non-profit foundations (municipal housing companies or MHCS)** with significant tenant involvement to flourish. In 1979, SABO and Hyresgästernas Riksförbund (the national tenants' union) encouraged collective tenant influence over housing management through 'principal agreements' between landlords and tenants. These agreements cover: arrangements for neighbourhood management; the constitution of 'contact committees'; rights to information and consultation on matters affecting the management of the housing and local environment; and the devolution of management tasks to tenants. Tenants' interests would be represented through estate contact committees elected at tenants' meetings. By the mid-1980s, 385 local agreements covering a range of tenant participation practices had been signed in the public sector (approximately 90% of the sector). A corollary to the introduction of local agreements occurred in 1981 when SABO proposed the esta-

blishment of estate-based management structures with devolved budgets. The aim of these was to increase the influence of tenants in choosing the level of services they wanted to pay for, and to ensure that rents reflected the degree and standards of service²³.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The **Tenancy Bargaining Act** (Hyresförhandlingslagen, 1978:304) states the way of negotiating and setting rents in Sweden.

TENANTS' PARTICIPATION

Residents' influence in the Swedish housing system is exerted through various resident bodies, the main ones being the tenants' union and the TOCs.

Hyresgästföreningen, the Swedish Union of Tenants was founded in 1923. By 2008, it had come to represent about 535,000 households/members, had approximately 14,000 elected representatives and about 800 employees. The Tenants Union negotiates for more than 90% of all rented accommodation in Sweden. The union agrees its policy and work programme at a Congress held every four years. It is organised at national level and linked with 21 regional boards, 200 district branches and a number of smaller unions or contact committees based at 'block' level on estates. Nationally, there are around 3,000 contact committees covering on average 300 dwellings each. The tenants' unions are funded by members' subscriptions and landlord fees. They also perform an important training role and tenants are compelled to do training prior to standing for election to contact committees²⁴. The Swedish tenants' movement has achieved a strong position in the policy making process and has been able to exert considerable influence on policy aims and objectives and the 'rules of the game' within which resident involvement is practised²⁵.

The Tenant Ownership is a specific kind of housing co-operatives in Sweden. The co-operative borrow the money to build the dwellings and owns and manage the real estate. Households or individuals become member of a housing co-operative, and they buy the right to live in a specific dwelling and create a board which decides on management and refurbishment. Every co-operative member is responsible for maintenance and refurbishment of his/her dwelling. The TOC movement is divided into two main types: attached and unattached (independent). Attached TOCs are organised within one of two

national umbrella organisations - the HSB and Riksbyggen (the Co-operative Building Organisation of the Swedish Trade Unions). Unattached TOCs are made up of co-operatives founded by a range of other organisations (building companies, groups of households, municipalities and so on).

Furthermore, according to the Act on municipal housing companies, **the public companies are obliged²⁶ to offer tenants an influence on their housing as well as the running of the company.** As we mentioned above, the role of municipal housing companies has also been key to tenants' participation in Sweden, through the above-mentioned '**principal agreements**' and funding of structures for tenants representation at estate level, and also thanks to their role in negotiating the rent with tenants' unions. Furthermore, municipal housing companies carry out **regular client/resident surveys** in the form of questionnaires which gauge how happy residents are with their apartments, the area, service and a number of other factors which may influence how happy people are with their accommodation.

As we mentioned above, public housing companies have a responsibility to take on all kinds of tenants. That means that they are often in charge of housing areas where many low-income households live, with ensuing social problems. The problems have a connection to residents' exclusion from a surrounding more affluent society and spatial segregation of certain socio-economical and ethnical groups from each other²⁷. In these areas it is sometimes hard to get people to engage in participation processes, but there are some very successful examples, as those presented later on in this study.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Most recently the housing sector in Sweden has been going through two major changes. First, the Swedish Parliament approved the new Public Municipal Housing Companies Act on the 22nd of June 2010. Following the new regulation, companies should run their operation on business-like principles, a deviation from the principles embodied in the Local Government Act requiring operations to be run on a cost price basis and preventing undertakings from being run for profit. At the same time, the Act clarifies that a business-like perspective is compatible with active social responsibility. A provision was also introduced limiting the distributions of surpluses made by housing companies.

At the same time, the Riksdag decided to introduce amendments to the Tenancy Act. Rents up to the 2011 were set by yearly local negotiations between the housing companies and representatives for the tenants, and the decided rents of Municipal Housing companies set the

ceiling for the rents in equivalent private landlord dwellings. Due to recent changes in legislation, the role of the public housing companies in setting the standard for rents is replaced by a normative role for rents that are negotiated collectively. A safeguard is also introduced to counteract significant rent increases having a rapid impact. These new provisions entered into force on 1 January 2011.

CONCLUSIONS

The corporatist tradition of Swedish society and its political system has permitted close co-operation between central government, municipalities, housing companies, the co-operative movement and the tenants' unions. Resident democracy in Sweden allows people a say over substantive issues affecting their residential experiences - for instance, planning the local environment and setting housing costs and the terms and conditions of occupation. Key to this success is the existence of a stable, permanent residents' movement in Sweden, with significant legal rights, and access to independent finance and professional support²⁸.

NOTES

21. Cooper
22. Kemenev (1995)
23. Cooper
24. Hyresgästföreningen (2008)
25. Cooper
26. Before 2011 the law said that they should strive to offer the tenants an influence, but with the new law this precondition is sharpened - now it says that they shall do so.
27. Werner (2007)
28. Cooper



SOURCES

Most of the information was collected by the Observatory through correspondence with CECODHAS Housing Europe's members and partners in each country, and in particular through a research project on Social Services of General Interest carried out in 2010. Other bibliographic sources were also used, as indicated in the text via footnotes.

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In the following pages you will find a detailed description of best practices of residents' involvement in housing. They cover different aspects of social housing: from the day-to-day running of a housing estate and related services, to urban renewal and rehabilitation of run-down neighbourhoods, to policy making in the housing field.

In Denmark, where tenants' democracy as a principle defined by law implies a high level of participation of inhabitants in the decision making and running of housing estates, we focus on an on-line tool created to evaluate social capital in 'difficult' housing estates. The on-line tool is used to carry out survey by and with residents to evaluate their level of satisfaction and the need for investing in social measures to enhance life in the neighbourhoods.

The three case studies from England are excellent examples of how a mix of regulation and organisational culture has led housing associations to implement a wide range of participatory practices, aimed at increasing the quality of housing services.

Among good practices in France, we concentrate first on the participation by inhabitants to the renewal of large social housing estates in Ile de France. The example of Partenord Habitat highlights the importance of learning about how residents evaluate the places where they live, while the third case is an example of participatory budget.

A social housing company in Bologna, Italy, has chosen to tackle problems of integration of people from different ethnic origins by involving residents in the management of its housing estates and in deciding about a number of social and capacity-building initiatives and services. The high level of mobilization led to the establishment of a tenants association on a permanent basis.

The example we have picked from the Netherlands shows how stimulating and taking into account resident ideas can not only lead to better maintenance, but also trigger creativity and a sense of pride among inhabitants.

One example illustrates participatory practices in housing policy-making: this is the case of the Basque Country, where the regional government has carried out an extensive and open process of consultation with all stakeholders and citizens in general to better define the needs and priority of housing policy and to enhance policy and legislative proposals in this field.

Another example from the same region, from the city of Bilbao, sees students find a suitable and cheap accommodation and in exchange for volunteer work in community projects.

The third example from Spain, this time from the city of Sevilla in Andalucia, is an excellent example of integrated urban renewal based on residents' involvement, winner of the AVS award for the best urban rehabilitation project.

Similarly to Denmark, in Sweden one of the main challenges to tenants participation identified is the presence of areas with high concentration of poverty and social exclusion. The 2 examples from Sweden therefore show ways of dealing with the stigma linked with segregated areas and the deriving anti-social behaviours by engaging with the residents, building on their ideas on how to improve the neighbourhood and providing opportunities for them (particularly for young people) to actively contribute to the life of the community.



2.1 Naboskabet: Measuring social capital in Danish housing estates

→ www.naboskabet.dk • contact: Keld Aadsbøl, ka@lbf.dk



Naboskabet is an on-line tool available both to tenants and to housing companies to investigate on social capital in different housing estates.

PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE

It helps users get a picture of life in the neighbourhood, by collecting residents' views on 7 themes:

- Overall satisfaction with living in the area.
- How much do people know each other?
- The residents' contacts outside the area - through sports, volunteer activities, etc.
- Security - how safe do residents feel in their neighbourhood?
- The physical environment - does it provide opportunities to meet each other and be together?
- How much is done collectively to maintain and enhance housing?
- Acceptance of diversity.

The website provides:

- Questionnaires (specific ones for children, teenagers and adults, available in 7 languages). The responses can be entered directly on the website.
- Help to conduct a survey, with information of all necessary practical steps.
- Advanced viewing results: users can get results from the entire area and for selected groups in a report - and compare their area with others.
- A catalogue of suggestions and good practices on how to enhance life in a neighbourhood.

The idea was initiated by a sociologist and KAB, a major Danish housing organisation.

OUTCOMES

It offers the possibility to evaluate the tenant's opinion about various initiatives before and after they have been carried out.

This serves as a basis to prove the need to invest for social purposes and its extent. Following a decision from the Parliament in 2009, HAs are going to spend over 135 million € each year from the National Housing Fund for social purposes in their housing estates.

2.2 Wakefield & District Housing: achieving excellence in residents' involvement

→ www.wdh.co.uk • contact: Juliet Craven, jcraven@wdh.co.uk

Wakefield and District Housing (WDH) is a charity and a registered social landlord, providing about 31,000 dwellings in the form of rental and shared ownership housing. The association also provides repairs services to other organisations and individual home owners, as well as telecare services to older and vulnerable people.

PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE

A whole menu of opportunities is offered to give residents the option to participate at a level they choose, whether it is influencing or making decisions or giving views, as part of WDH engagement approach.

Options include:

- Being involved in the governance of the organisation by taking a place on the Board or becoming a member of the local management committee structure of the organisation
- Becoming a 'tenant inspector': WDH Tenant Inspectors are volunteers who check how services are delivered, are empowered to challenge and help improve the quality of them. They plan and carry out periodic inspections, report their findings on how well the service is being delivered in line with WDH's published standards and make recommendations for action on how the service could be improved.
- Fun and Feedback sessions are tailored to diverse groups that are invited in to give their opinion on specific issues pertinent to themselves.
- The Youth Forum focuses on how more young people can be involved so that WDH can work with them to address their circumstances.
- Virtual Forum user group has been established using web based feedback, where members actively take part in consultation and surveys using web based technology. This ensures WDH has regular contact with those tenants who have busy lives and who may not always be able to attend meetings.
- WDH's Text Messaging Forum provides an opportunity for younger tenants to give views about the organisation using mobile phone short messaging services.

- Tenants' and Residents' Associations registered with WDH are provided with a computer, printer, monitor and internet access to enable them to make contact quickly and effectively.

- The Community Talkback process engages tenant representatives identifying key priorities in their communities each month for WDH to action, on the principle of 'you said we've done'.

- The Chartered Institute of Housing's Active Learning for Residents Programme, has enabled WDH to help tenants obtain formal qualifications for the work they undertake in the community. This has helped raise confidence and the outcome is that they have become more actively involved in formal decision making.

- The Family Fun Day is held annually and attracts over 3,000 people whose views on priorities are obtained, as well as promoting initiatives such as healthy lifestyles.

- Meet the Chief Executive sessions are held where tenants who have not previously been involved with WDH are sent a personal invitation to meet with the Chief Executive and discuss issues affecting their areas and lives. As with other activities, they are kept updated with the outcomes of what they have raised. This has also resulted in some invitees becoming engaged with WDH and even becoming members of the LMCs.

OUTCOMES

Effective participation increases satisfaction with services provided. This also has a direct impact on the quality of the home in that if people are involved in the quality and standard of their homes and estates, this creates community pride and sustainability. The relationship between the landlord and tenant is much improved, and there are financial gains in that services are tailored to what the tenants actually want, rather than what the landlord thinks the tenant may want.

Furthermore, this approach has contributed to WDH being awarded the Audit Commission's three stars and excellence, the Tenant Participation Advisory Service's Quality Accreditation for Resident Involvement and most recently the British Quality Foundation's UK Excellence Award.



2.3 Cross Keys Homes: Keys to involvement

→ www.crosskeyshomes.co.uk • contact: Katie Taylor, katie.taylor@crosskeyshomes.co.uk

Cross Keys Homes (CKH) is a registered social landlord managing approximately 10,000 housing units, for rent and shared ownership. CKH also provides a community alarm service to tenants and private residents. This service is offered on a national basis thanks to a 24-hour control centre.

PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE

CKH has a community investment team which delivers our resident involvement, young people's and community strategies. The team consists of a community investment manager, community programme manager and a resident involvement manager. CKH offers a number of options to its tenants who want to be involved.

To mention a few:

- **Area panels** – environmental improvements: Cross Keys Homes' award-winning area panels have been nationally recognised for their achievements in putting residents at the heart of decision-making and managing substantial budgets to prioritise spend on environmental improvements.
- **Tenant auditors** – improving standards: tenant auditors inspect works to empty properties and repairs to residents' homes. This process allows the organisation to learn from any mistakes and continuously improve our repairs service.
- **Policy review group** – best practice: the policy review group has reviewed policies and a procedure using best practice examples to ensure CKH is providing the best possible service to residents. As a result the group's work has contributed to changes in the style and content of the rent statement and the introduction of weekly direct debits.
- **Sheltered housing forum** – service improvement: the sheltered housing forum has been involved in a project to help design the future of the sheltered housing service and has a sub-group which prioritises improvement work on schemes.
- **Resident liaison group** – involvement and consultation: Cross Keys Homes' resident liaison group (CRLG) is the key consultative group which scrutinises performance and provides important feedback. Its contribution ensures the organisation takes into account the views of residents on important issues which affect residents' lives.

- **One equality forum** – diversity: the One equality forum has equality impact assessed policies and procedures to make sure that no one group or individual is disadvantaged by CKH services.

OUTCOMES

'Tenants have helped us to ensure we provide an excellent level of customer service, prioritise estate and environmental improvements including the building of play areas and green gym equipment which has increased pride among residents in the neighbourhood'.



2.4 Shepherds Bush Housing Association: residents/shareholders at the centre of decision making

→ <http://www.sbhg.co.uk/Home/tabid/36/Default.aspx>
contact: Paul Doe, Shepherds Bush Housing Group, paul.doe@sbhg.co.uk

Shepherds Bush Housing Association is an industrial & provident society and a registered social landlord. The association was created in 1968 and currently manages about 5,000 dwellings, besides providing a wide range of additional services to its residents and neighbourhoods.

PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE

- **Shareholder membership**: SBHA has been working with tenants for over twenty years and have had tenants on its board since that time. Furthermore, the opportunity was introduced for residents to become shareholders of SBHA which allows them to vote for the Board at the AGM. At the present time 377 shareholders are tenants or residents out of a total of 446. A third of the board is also composed by tenants.
- **Independent Tenants' Committee (ITC)**: it is the main tenant consultative body for tenants within SBHA and it carries out monitoring of services. Tenant monitors also assist officers to monitor local estate services.
- **Meet the Chief Executive meetings**: they are held three times a year, with open agendas in locations close to tenants.
- **Big Conversation**: it's an exercise carried out every year and the information influences planning and development of future services. Tenant surveys are regularly carried out.
- **Development of Tenant and Resident Associations**: SBHA has been very successful in starting up new tenant and resident association in its larger estates.

SBHA monitors how many tenants get involved each year (in 2009-2010 2,769 residents attended 172 events). It also monitors tenants' satisfaction that their views are being taken into account and with the overall satisfaction with SBHA. SBHA also gets assessed twice per year by an external organisation, Quality Housing Services limited, which covers also resident involvement. Following the last visit, SBHA scored 94%.



OUTCOMES

The "local offers" that we are developing with our residents is a very good example of how residents can influence decisions about the services they receive and the local area they live in – such as the frequency that their area is cleaned, whether or not they have controlled parking in their area and if they require additional security such as controlled entry systems, CCTV etc. This awareness of tenants' needs prevents wasted effort on unwanted or misdirected services and helps us to concentrate on tenant priorities. Better value for money will flow from services and standards set by tenants and residents to meet their expectations.



2.5 Logement francilien: working together for successful urban renewal in Dammarie-les-Lys

→ www.logementfrancilien.fr

Logement Francilien is a housing social enterprise (entreprise social de l'habitat, or ESH) part of the Group Logement Français. Based in Ile-de-France, the company manages 31,597 social housing units in over 90 municipalities. Rental management is ensured by sixteen decentralized management units, led by three regional directorates of Managers. Located close to their housing stock and with a wide degree of discretion, these teams represent the link with the residents and local decision makers.

Very present in Seine-et-Marne, Logement Francilien has been working in Dammarie-les-Lys for 40 years. It manages about 4,000 housing units in the entire department, including nearly 1,500 in Dammarie-les-Lys. Logement Francilien is involved in the urban renewal plan for the municipality.

PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE

- In Dammarie -les-Lys, at first big public meeting were organised to raise awareness among the population of the urban renewal process.
- A second phase has now started to work more in depth with small groups of residents, focusing on specific issues. 20 to 25 people are usually involved in each workshop. Several workshops are held with the support of an office for residents' participation, and a full report from the workshops is sent to all tenants.
- To guarantee an optimal development of the project, a commitment Carter was developed together with enterprises involved in the renewal plan and the inhabitants.
- Finally, visits to the neighbourhood are organised that allow people to learn about the nature of on-going works and the organisation of the site.

OUTCOMES

Commenting on the initiatives in Dammarie-les-Lys, Diana Kostic, responsible for urban social development, says that 'We are now more effective and efficient as we have really entered a process of listening to each other and planning activities together'. According to Gerard Seigne, president of the executive board, residents' participation constitutes 'an amazing catalyst for action, a major asset for the success of a project'.



2.6 Partenord Habitat: Co-production of the housing stock classification

→ www.partenordhabitat.fr

Partenord Habitat is the public housing agency (office public de habitat, OPH) of the Northern Department in France, managing about 39,000 dwellings which house over 90,000 people in the department.

Since 2009, HLM providers must elaborate a classification of their housing stock on the basis of the services provided to tenants. Partenord Habitat has taken the opportunity to make this classification a central theme for consultation and co-decision with the residents.

PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE

Partenord Habitat has elaborated together with tenant associations the assessment grid on the basis of which the housing stock is classified.

In April 2010, the organisation has invited all tenant associations in the department, the four relevant administrators as well as 11 other local associations to work together on examples of quotations.

The objective was to co-produce an assessment grid which can allow classifying the housing stock independently from the issue of rent levels.

3 workshops were established:

- one focussed on classification criteria based on the availability of services and commercial activities in the area, transports and mobility, and the image of the neighbourhood;
- one worked on the criteria related to the buildings, the surrounding areas, green spaces, availability of parking space, and the image of the buildings 'from outside';
- the third one looked at the buildings 'from the inside', including the apartments and the common areas.

Participants were then divided according to geographical areas, with local associations meeting their local counterparts from the housing organisation to evaluate the homes they know and where they live.

This way the quality of services in the 30 buildings concerned was looked at in details.

OUTCOMES

This initiative will be extended to the rest of the housing estates managed by Partenord Habitat through its 10 local departments. The enquiries will serve as a basis for drawing up action plans together with residents for the enhancement of housing services.

2.7 Logiparc: the participatory budget

→ www.logiparc.fr/presentation-activites.html

Logiparc is the public housing agency in Poitiers, managing about 7,500 dwellings. It's now 9 years that Logiparc has established a participatory budget of 500,000 €/year.

PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE

Tenants who wish to do so can propose and debate future works to be implemented in his/her own dwelling, during yearly tenants meetings. All tenants are invited to take part to these meetings, which are also attended by the president of the OPH, as well as representatives from the local administration and from tenant associations.

The participatory budget corresponds to a part of Logiparc's budget for works, which is delegated to the six rental co-decision councils (conseils de concertation

locative, see page 8) which correspond to the 6 areas where the OPH owns and manages dwellings. The councils are composed by an equal number of representatives from the tenant associations and from the landlord organisation. Field visits of the councils are organised in the 6 areas or 'sectors', leading to establishing the priority of works to be carried out.

OUTCOMES

In 2010, this budget allowed for instance to re-paint doors, to install mixing valves and water saving tools, to rebuild paths in front of entry doors, to modify external lightning, and other similar improvements

2.8 ACER Bologna: integrating immigrant families through participation in Navile

→ www.acerbologna.it • contact: Piergiacomo Braga, pbraga@acerbologna.it



ACER Bologna is the public company managing the municipal social housing stock in Bologna, Italy.

Together with the Municipality of Bologna, ACER started a programme to improve tenants' participation in 2009, called Territori in Rete per l'accesso all'alloggio (local network for access to housing). This Project seeks to improve integration and social inclusion in the public housing neighbourhoods' through the instruments of cultural mediation: inhabitants' participation in involvement activities such as micro-events and hubs.

A first experimentation of the Project has been realized in Quartiere Navile, a city area strongly characterized by socio-cultural mix.

PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE

The objective of integration has been realized through the help of an expert team of cultural mediation from Felsimedia non-profit cooperative.

1. Firstly cultural mediation experts administered a questionnaire to the inhabitants in order to collect information about households' composition, families' needs and cohabitation problems.

2. Subsequently the analysis of questionnaires served as a basis to create events and opportunities for cultural integration such as afterschool activities for children, multimedia hubs and languages lessons. About thirty households took part in the labs activities; for the most part they came from Nord Africans countries (Morocco and Tunisia).

3. Thirdly, the process led to the creation of a new association of residents aimed at tenants collective management.

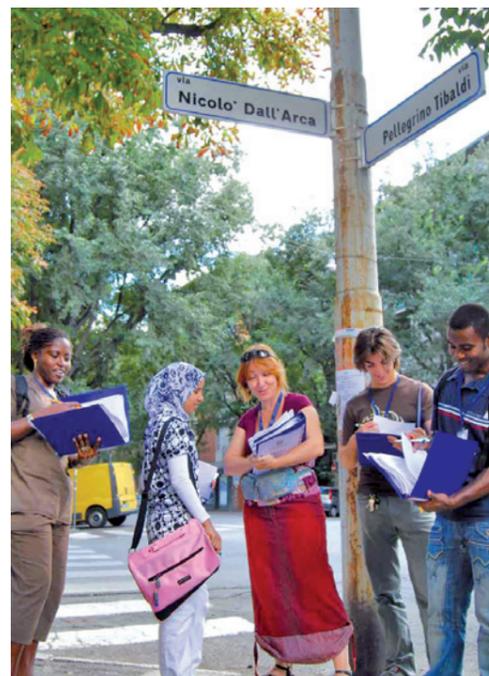
Tenants demonstrated a strong involvement into hubs and initiative and they responded positively to the constitution of the tenants association.

OUTCOMES

One of the most important outcomes of the project has been the setting up of a tenant association in order to give to its members the opportunity to meet, to organize events and discuss about neighbourhood issues. It represents a good example of bottom-up decision making process.

Moreover the involvement initiatives and the labs activities contributed to improve not only integration among tenants but also their personal skills of various kinds (as for example language and computer skills for immigrant families).

Continuing its commitment towards giving a more prominent role to residents, ACER Bologna signed a memorandum of understanding with local tenants unions in February 2010 to enhance quality of services. This agreement is an operational tool establishing an obligation to organize regular meetings, promote new forms of participation for current and prospective tenants, to start special projects in the field of social mediation, energy savings, and integration of immigrants through housing.



2.9 Aert Swaens: Open planning process in Zonderwijk

→ contact: Tineke Zuidervaart, AEDES, t.zuidervaart@aedes.nl



Woningstichting Aert Swaens is a Dutch housing association owning around 4.200 dwellings in Veldhoven and Waalre (Eindhoven region). In 2008, the housing association started an intensive consultation with its residents in order to decide together on large-scale maintenance work and, more in general, to give back an identity and sense of belonging to this neighbourhood.

PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE

1. All tenants received a personal letter inviting them to meet with Aert Swaens 'In person'. Between January and April 2008, 125 face-to-face conversations were held. A process in which the entire organisation took part, from client adviser to director: all departments were actively involved. This allowed residents in their own environment ('in their own front room') to talk freely about their experience of living on this estate. The topics raised were residential histories, the social and physical environment, facilities, safety and the future. A questionnaire was also sent to all non-tenants on the estate.

2. This project was followed relatively quickly by a second one: 'Digging for treasure on the estate'. This was a joint action by the municipal authorities and the association, in terms of the investment of both time and money, in order to give the estate a clear identity, to create a provisional estate vision and integrated approach. Here too, the residents were central to the process. A concept defining the identity of the estate was elaborated through creative sessions and chosen by residents. The concept finally chosen – 'Allotments' – was embraced pretty well unanimously. People readily identified with the nature of an allotment: together but also on your own, constant attention is needed to achieve growth. Furthermore, the presence of abundant greenery on the estate is its most noticeable asset. To capture this quality in an image, creative residents of the estate were called upon to contribute to the creation of an estate logo. From the responses received, a choice was made for the son of Russian immigrants who the previous year had graduated from the Design Academy in Eindhoven and was active in the local skate and break-dance subculture. Together with the communication department of Aert Swaens, he designed a logo that will clearly represent the Zonderwijk estate's identity in the years ahead. We are currently working on an image campaign designed to work both in and outside of the estate.

3. Open planning process for large-scale maintenance: this concerns a total of 360 homes, to be improved in phases. The consultation started for the residents eighteen months ago with a residents' evening, where the housing association, knowing roughly what they had to improve, listened to ideas from the residents instead of presenting a final plan which people may not have agreed to.

A feedback group was set up and the people in this group did fantastic work by expressing the residents' wishes. Alongside a mandatory part of work (principally in terms of energy and the replacement of kitchens and sanitary facilities), residents were able to state what additional facilities they would like to see. The mandatory part had no consequences for the rent, although of course this was the case with the options. Throughout the process, two model homes were made available, with a double aim: on the one hand, to show people what the improvements look like in reality, and on the other to act as a meeting place for residents among themselves and with people from Aert Swaens, allowing them to be available and in the area virtually all of the time.

OUTCOMES

Following the 'In person' project, Aert Swaens is using the results of both surveys as the foundation for the development of its vision for the estate, and – equally importantly – as a basis for its discussions with the municipal authorities and all its other social partners involved in getting done the things that really need to be done.

A start has now been made on the maintenance project, on the first series of 132 homes. The consultation period meant that the vast majority of the improvements corresponded to the expectations of the residents (for instance the combination of a mandatory package with an optional package was also a direct result of the intensive consultation). This really did put the client first, and the grassroots support this generated meant that no time was lost during implementation through arguments and obstruction.

By taking the initiative to talk to the people and to share the results with our partners, Zonderwijk is now a hive of activity. Once the project is completed, Zonderwijk will be able to look forward to the future again, as it did in the past – with great pride.

2.10 Bilbao Viviendas: Students solidarity Housing Programme

→ www.bilbao.net/viviendas • contact: Monike Nicolas, mnicolas@vmm.bilbao.net



BILBAO VIVIENDAS is the municipal housing company in Bilbao. Established in 1918, it is an autonomous local body. It owns and rents out 3,736 apartments, as well as 968 non-residential units.

Bilbao Viviendas started an innovative programme in 2010. 6 apartments, located in Otxarkoaga, were allocated to 14 post-graduate students for only 40 euros per month. In exchange for that, students benefitting from this programme must dedicate at least 4 hours per week to community activities in the neighbourhood. The programme started following a proposal by the University of the Basque Country to transfer a practice already in use in university campuses to Bilbao Viviendas, under the framework and financing of the European project Reahabitat, aimed at improving the quality of life for people in social housing (EFA69/08).

PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE

1. Before selecting the participating students and starting the project, Bilbao Viviendas organised meetings with neighbours and local tenants to present the programme, and to exchange impressions.

2. After selecting students, they were accompanied by the team from Bilbao Viviendas in their re-location and sett-

ling into the new apartments. Visits were also performed after a period of time to verify the success of the initiative.

3. A meeting was held with the several third sector associations working in the district, matching them with the students so that they could volunteer in the community.

4. Actual participation of the students through volunteer work: Students living in public housing dedicate four hours a week to community activities. Specifically, they take part into organizing and revitalizing communities of neighbours and into actions to improve community life, such as those included in the plan of socio-community involvement 'Imagine Otxarkoaga'.

OUTCOMES

- Diversification of the tenant population with university graduates who specialize in social action and community.
- Improved life in the block and improved relations between neighbours.
- Highlighting the neighbourhood and its ability, through the provision of new programs and resources.
- To some extent, amelioration of new public apartments, improvements in public and communal areas.

2.11 Empresa Pública de Suelo de Andalucía: rehabilitation of Poligono Sur

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Poligono Sur is a neighbourhood in Seville (Andalucía, Spain), 145 hectares with a population approaching 50,000. The Poligono Sur district could be described as "isolated" by physical barriers. Furthermore, the area presents problems of social exclusion, security, employment, social issues, housing, health and education, among others, which are seriously impacting the neighbourhood.

PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE

1. To address this situation, the Government of Andalucía, in collaboration with the city of Sevilla and the Central Government established a 'Neighbourhood Commissioner' for the Poligono Sur, with the aim of implementing a Comprehensive Plan for the neighbourhood to improve coexistence and living conditions in the area, responding to the claims raised by the Neighborhood Movement already for a long time.

2. The Office for the Management and Rehabilitation of Poligono Sur, managed by the regional housing and land company (Empresa Pública de Suelo de Andalucía, EPSA), was launched by the Ministry of Public Works and Housing of the Junta de Andalucía, to develop housing and land policy within the Comprehensive Plan, in coordination with the 'Neighbourhood Commissioner'.

3. A Housing Office was established in the district. It acts as one stop shop for personalized solutions for the needs of Poligono Sur, working from the beginning with the local community to involve them in the process.

4. The Commitment Polígono Sur, a social document of compliance with duties and rights framed within the Plan, was signed with neighbors and communities.

5. Specific discussion forums were created by the Commissioner (Housing Tables and Neighborhood Committees, among others) to coordinate development with neighbors and different public services.

OUTCOMES

The benefits are directly related to sustainability of the project. It has a long-term time horizon and benefits are being progressively consolidated.

In current times and with the existing budget adjustments, it is crucial that the public is informed and understand the decisions to be taken. In a neighbourhood characterised by a high level of social conflict such as Poligono Sur, involving the population (by informing them on the situation) provides a considerable reduction in the level of tension and nuisance among residents.



2.12 Citizens' participation in housing policy-making: the example of the Basque Country

→ www.etxebide.info

Housing is one of the main concerns of Basque citizens, and in a context of deep financial and economic crisis with high unemployment rates, the contraction in credit availability and restrictions on public resources, the Basque Government considers more necessary than ever to join forces and to search for wide consensus to ensure all citizens the right of access to adequate housing.

As a result of public concern and the need to define a new housing policy and make essential legislative changes in order to apply it, the Department of Housing, Public Works and Transport of the Basque Government (hereinafter, Department of Housing) has designed and implemented a participative process structured into 3 sub-processes, through which it aims to foster the full participation of the Basque Society in drawing up housing strategy (the Social Contract for Housing), policy lines (the Housing and Urban Regeneration Plan) and legislation (the Basque Housing Law).

PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE

1. The Social Contract for Housing (Pacto Social por la Vivienda) was signed between the Basque Government and 78 social and economic actors in the housing field. The document represents the Basque housing strategy for 2010-2015. To discuss the document, 1 world cafe, workshops and bilateral meetings were held, with the participation of a total of 120 people from 90 institutional, social and economic agents. The participation process is carried out through the Pact Monitoring Committee, which is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the strategic resources agreed in the Pact, and meets twice a year.

2. Parallel to this, there has been a process of direct participation by the citizens aimed at identifying their real needs and learning about their opinions and proposals around the issue of housing. Under the slogan 'Your opinion counts' a dedicated on-line platform was launched, with several tools such as forums for debate, surveys, participative interviews, a section for submitting proposals, as well as all relevant documentation. Specific profiles on social networks (Facebook and Twitter) were also created, and both Spanish and Basque language were used throughout the process.

Contributions and opinions from a wide range of people were gathered. In total, 15,748 people participated. 5,230 surveys were answered, 569 opinions were expressed through the forum, and 120 suggestions made through "Your Proposals". Of all the proposals received, once they have been sorted into topics and globally analysed, 45 citizen proposals were evaluated for their potential inclusion. The impact of this exercise was significant. Of the 45 citizen proposals, a total of 30 were included in the Housing and Urban Regeneration Plan 2010-2013.

3. Currently a new initiative is ongoing called 'creating housing together' through which the regional government wants to collect opinions from the citizens on the measures proposed in the project for the new Basque Housing Law, so that the document can be enhanced and new ideas can be included. Citizens participate through an e-participation platform on the Etxebide-Basque Housing Service web-page, which is the tool provided by the Department of Housing to deal with the demand for subsidised housing in the Basque Country.

OUTCOMES

From the point of view of the government, the participatory process is proving useful in searching for the best possible solutions. Furthermore, certain measures in the housing sector can be very difficult to implement if they cannot rely on a very high level of consensus. Therefore the government prefers to listen, discuss and negotiate with all stakeholders and with citizens although this requires some time. It is an innovative process which constitutes an example for other public administrations, at local, regional or even national level.



2.13 MKB Fastighets AB: home visits as a starting point for Rosengård renewal

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In Malmö, the area Herrgård is a large housing estate built in the 1960s and early 1970s, and it has become a prime example of a non-functioning large scale neighbourhood, described as the worst part of the more famous district called Rosengård. The area is characterised by multi-cultural mix with residents from many parts of the world, and it is one of Sweden's most overcrowded neighbourhoods. The general picture is major social problems, poverty and a deteriorated physical environment reflected in bad school performance, poor health, riots, fires and a high crime rates. Furthermore, Herrgård is divided among several private property owners and a large proportion of the properties have changed ownership several times over the last 15 years. This situation has adversely affected the neighbourhood with an absence of sustainable efforts over time. Malmö municipality let the municipal housing company acquire 6 properties in 2006 with 300 dwellings. They made a detailed examination of the properties. The properties needed a complete renovation and the outdoor environment was in very poor condition.

The municipal housing company initially created a strong local administration consisting of 6 persons with a very long experience and knowledge about running similar projects in other areas, who were handpicked and organized at a local office. At first the staff needed to build up confidence, commitment and get tenants to participate actively in the process of change. An important step for the housing company was to meet all tenants and to do home visits in order to gain knowledge of the individual needs and to start up a new trustful relationship.

PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE

1. The housing company did three home visits to every single household in a period of three years, for a total of 900 home visits. The main reason was **confirm** the tenants and to "see" them as ordinary people. Our staff asked questions about everything that could be important, history, origin, family situation, etc. The tenants had many ideas about how housing quality could be improved and this was summarized and organized in eight different components, including both social and physical countermeasures ranked according to how often these measures were mentioned by the tenants in the interviews.

2. Based on tenants' needs the work to fulfil basic requirements and to improve the general housing standards began. It proved to be a deep commitment among tenants who contributed with social activities in the neighbourhood.

3. The implementation of the working plan included five different subject:

- Caretaking: The frontline staff did daily supervision of all space and increased accessibility for tenants
- Property maintenance/outdoor environment (e.g. upgrading and refining of the courtyards, green areas, properties and renovations of individual apartments): tenants were active in these processes and participated in the decision-making to select materials, colours and design etc. All renovation has been in dialogue with the tenants and the frontline staff got feedback after the measures were implemented. Furthermore, tenants have been involved in management work, e.g. children and adolescents help staff with various chores after school.
- Tenant relation: This represents a special focus on continuous home visits and appointments with tenants when faults are solved. The aim is to create a natural relationship based on trust, and thereby improve the contact between the housing company and the tenants. It has not been difficult, thanks to this work, to get tenants to participate in various social activities.
- Information: Aims to improve tenants' knowledge of management, rules and responsibilities through information in stairways, newsletters and home visits.

■ Social projects: Social measures have been a fundamental strategy to create conditions for effective property management. It includes neighbourhood related activities and sponsorship with other organisations. A particular focus was to create activities for children and young people, who were identified as the main responsible for disturbances and problems with vandalism.

A number of organisations were involved in social measures, e.g. community organizations, schools, private businesses, other property owners and non-profit organizations. In general the level of participation by the 300 households involved was very high.

OUTCOMES

The home visits to tenants carried out by the housing company provided both parties with important information. At the same time, it has created a mutual understanding e. g. that the housing company improved the service and that the tenants better fulfilled their obligations. The result speaks for itself and both tenants and staff emphasize that it is far less problems with vandalism and disturbances today, four years after the municipal housing company took over from the private owner. Costs of certain management and maintenance activities has decreased, such as that of maintenance of



outdoor environment, garbage disposal, removal of graffiti, general destruction cost, and disturbance cost, fire damage, etc.

2.14 Telge Hovsjö: a locally based organisation to involve residents and youth

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Hovsjö is an area of Södertälje, approximately 30 km south of Stockholm. The neighbourhood consists of 3 and 8 storey apartment blocks, built in the 70s. Most are rentals and individual blocks are cooperative and owner occupied dwellings. There are about 1.450 dwellings and another 500 are privately owned. The area has a high proportion of immigrants in the first or second generation, more than 80%. Hovsjö's other residents are mainly Swedes and Finns who have moved to the area for work, but today about half of those eligible for work in Hovsjö are inactive. The average income levels are low and the proportion of welfare recipients is high. In recent years the neighbourhood has been marked by low status and a relatively high out-migration. Therefore it was felt that it was not enough to build on and make changes "on the surface". Telge Hovsjö was formed in 2007 and took over the management of the housing stock in Hovsjö. The company has a mission that includes both management of real estate and residential social work.

PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE

1. A new organization has been created where the majority of the board members live in the area. It has identified the renovation needs in the area, outlined various development opportunities, and has developed a comprehensive vision for the work. Furthermore, court representatives act as liaison between management and residents

2. Hovsjö has at times had major problems with car fires and youth riots. A first step was therefore to overcome the troubles and create peace in the area. An important part of the strategy has been to engage older youth in positive activities and allow them to act as role models for the younger ones. According to the wishes of young

people, a gym was started. Several of the older ones took part in building the gym, which has become very popular and helped to reduce the unrest considerably. The gym is still run mainly by young residents themselves.

3. Hovsjö Summer is another practical activity in which young people have been offered a summer job and thus engaged in the process of developing Hovsjö, including renovating the park. The initiative has been highly appreciated by the residents and has involved hundreds of young people. As a result of the successes of Hovsjö Summer, it has also started a mediation of youth services to other companies.

4. In 2010, a new school is also being built in Hovsjö. At the same time, the old school building is going to be converted into a cultural and commercial centre. The idea is that the centre will house activities of all kinds and become a natural meeting place in the area, both for Hovsjö residents and visitors from other parts of Södertälje. Through collaboration with universities, companies and other organizations, the idea is that the centre will function as a base and create conditions for new businesses. The project called 'Hovsjö Hub' is based on the idea that the entire process should be led by tenants through their initiative and ideas.

OUTCOMES

Via Hovsjö Summer, hundreds of young people have gotten involved in summer jobs and Hovsjö's development, including the renovation of the park. In the longer term, the idea is to create jobs and training opportunities in the construction sector for young people in the area in connection with the renovation projects.

2.15 Key findings from the case studies

MEASURES AND TOOLS FOR RESIDENTS' INVOLVEMENT

In the examples included in this report, social housing providers and policy makers recur to a wide range of activities to ensure residents involvement at different level. Different measures and tools implemented correspond to different goals and levels of participation.

1) Mobilising residents – mobilising residents is the first step to foster their participation, and it includes one or more of the following:

- Supporting **resident & tenant associations**, including allocating them specific premises and budget for their activities
- Carrying out **home visits/face to face meetings** with residents
- **Information campaigns** on rights and duties of residents and possibilities for them to get involved
- **Events to socialize**, such as for instance neighbours parties
- **Training and capacity** building for residents to be able to meet their potential
- Workshops and **creative** sessions
- Use of **external experts** in participatory practices/ social mediation is in some cases necessary

2) Collecting users' opinions/inputs – this often includes techniques which are 'borrowed' from the commercial world and market research, and collect information from residents individually. Among them:

- **Satisfaction surveys** and questionnaires
- **Telephonic complaint/information services**
- Setting up local **'one stop shops'**
- **On-line forums**

3) Consulting tenants and involving them in decision-making – residents are usually consulted and take part to decision making collectively:

- **Consultation committees** which are consulted by the board on a regular basis
- **Negotiations** with tenant/residents on issues of common interest (in particular maintenance or changes which can affect rents/cost of utilities)
- Opportunities to **meet with CEO** or other management officials of the housing organisation who are usually not working directly with residents
- **Thematic forums/groups** dealing with specific issues or targeting specifically certain groups within the community
- **Open planning** session in case of physical changes
- Signing **local 'agreements'** with residents where future activities and works are planned according to the specific local needs

4) Involving residents in the management of the organisation: this is translated in the fact that the housing provider has a **board in which tenants are represented**. Out of the cases examined so far, this practice is compulsory for social housing organisations in the Netherlands and in Denmark (in the latter case, the majority of a housing association board is composed by tenants). It is also very widespread among housing associations in the UK. Most important, it is typical of housing cooperatives and other forms of mutual housing (which we will discuss later on in part 3). These models though imply that residents are at the same time users and owners of the organisation providing housing. This is not the case of the examples examined so far in this report. One exception to this is Shepherds Bush Housing Association, which encourages its tenants to also become shareholders of the association.

5) Involving residents in the delivery of services: this type of practices imply a certain degree of co-production of services. Experiences such as 'building communities' or self-build initiatives, which will be discussed later on in chapter 3, are more 'radical' examples of residents being at the same time users and producers of services.

- **Tenant inspectors/auditors:** this practice is particularly widespread in the UK. It is carried out by volunteers who inspect and evaluate services and then report to the housing association, informing on problems and making suggestions on how to develop better services.
- Residents contributing through **volunteer work to social activities**
- Residents taking care of **maintenance work/upkeep of communal areas**
- Residents taking care of **gardens/vegetable allotments**
- Residents acting as **advisors to other inhabitants**, with tasks including for instance taking care of newcomers in the building, or acting as 'energy ambassadors'
- **Partnership with other local social/civil society** organisations which are present in the area

CHALLENGES

We have identified five main problems or challenges a housing organisation can face when it comes to involve its residents in the management of the organisation and in the neighbourhood life.

1) Mobilizing residents: this is the most common challenge. There are several factors influencing the capacity of a housing provider to mobilise its residents.

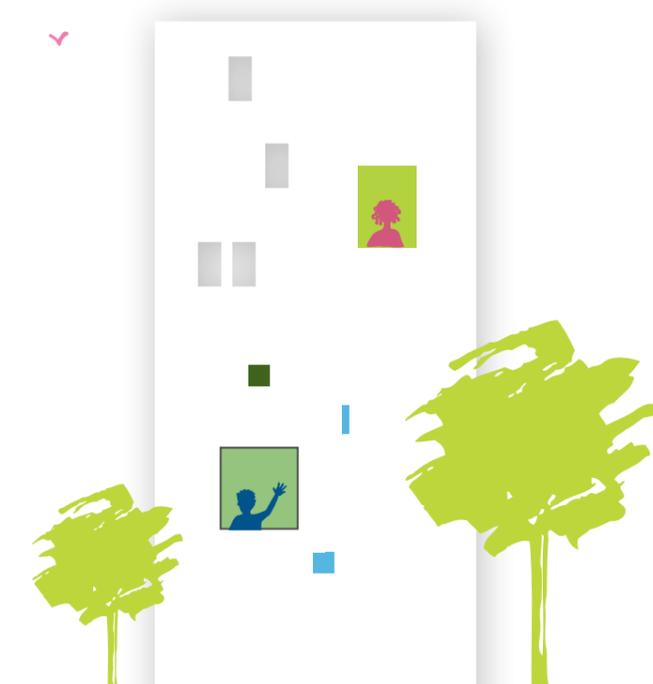
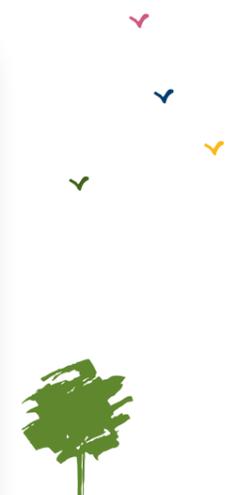
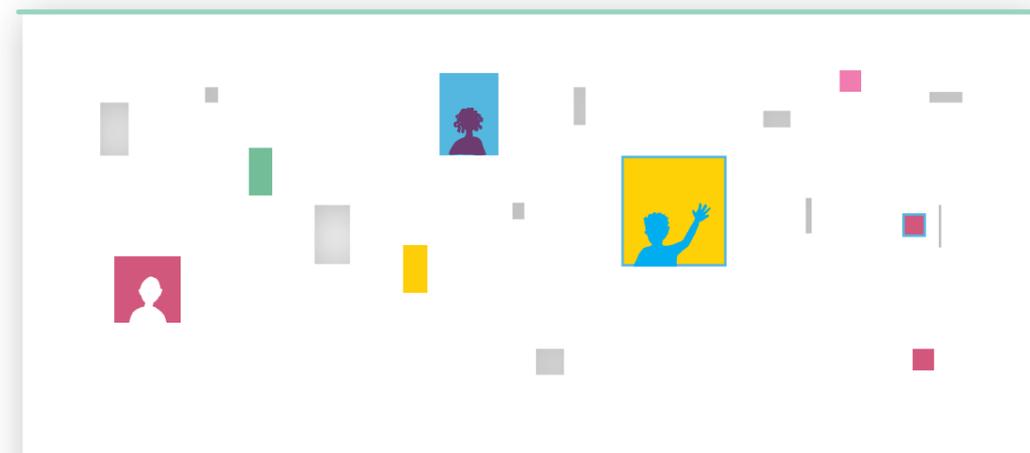
- In general, as pointed out by some of the respondents, it can be difficult to involve **residents facing harsh socio-economic conditions** who are less inclined to participate to consultation processes or to be active in local associations. As observed by the public housing company in Sevilla (Spain), 'the everyday struggle for basic needs leaves little time and energy to participate to collective construction of public intervention'.
- Furthermore, 'involved' tenants are not necessarily representative of the entire population. **Migrants and people from ethnic or religious minorities** for instance tend to be less involved. As a way to deal with this issue, some housing associations in England profile actively involved residents against diversity strands, to ensure that the views of all sections of the community are heard. It's also very important to pay attention to linguistic and cultural diversity in planning and implementing the various initiatives (for instance by translating available documents in different languages).

● **Adolescents and young people** are also often difficult to mobilize, but their active presence is essential to ensure social mix and peaceful life in neighbourhoods. This can require specific initiatives targeting young people, as shown by some of the analysed projects. In Hovsjö (Sweden) for instance young people are involved in the running of the local gym (created on the basis of their request) and in the renovation, as well as being offered summer jobs. In Bilbao, volunteer work in the community is provided by students in exchange for an affordable rented flat, helping to increase age diversity in the neighbourhood and revitalising the community. The use of internet based tools (websites, blogs and social networks) can also help to attract more participation from young people.

● In general it seems that **the bigger the housing estates managed, the more difficult** it is for a housing organisation to be really in touch with residents and their reality. This is why it has proved particularly important in big estates to encourage residents associations, and establish local sections and committees. In the case of Telge Hovsjö this even led to the establishment by the municipal administration of a smaller local housing organisation which could be really locally rooted.

2) Defining a clear strategy and 'rules of the game' – it is important to define:

- **what should be obtained** through participation
- the **scope** of the participatory practices
- **roles** of residents and landlord
- **monitoring and evaluation** tools which can serve as a basis for revising the strategy



3) Allocating the appropriate resources: although it is usually difficult to separate costs related to involving tenants from the total cost of a project, from the case studies it emerged clearly that implementing effective participation of inhabitants necessarily implies some costs for the provider. Through the case studies, we have identified four main areas in which housing providers have to invest specifically to enhance participation:

- **Dedicated staff:** for all the projects presented, no matter the specific type of measure adopted, keeping residents informed, mobilising them, listening to their requests and providing feedback requires dedicated personnel.

- **Training and information:** some sort of training in participatory methodologies is usually required both for the staff of the housing organisation as well as for the tenants/residents. Information on the rights and duties of residents and the possible channels for participation is also key.

- **Premises:** participation usually require specific premises, communal facilities and equipment (computer, etc), in particular those that should be put at the disposal of residents groups and associations for their activities, but also more in general shared areas and facilities for the local community.

- **Specific budget for tenants' associations/groups/committees:** this is the case for example in Sweden or in the Netherlands, where housing providers must allocate a specific budget to tenants' associations.

- **Communication** to reach out to as many residents as possible but also to other (potential) partners

- **Time:** consulting residents and involving them in the decision making generally takes time. For instance co-decision on maintenance work or participatory planning can mean starting works a bit later. On the other hand, you end up saving time during implementation by avoiding arguments and obstructions.

It is also important to stress that in many cases there is no specific public financial support available for social housing providers to implement measures aimed at increasing residents' involvement, and therefore most of the related costs are covered directly by the organisation's budget.

4) Overcoming lack of confidence: this is particularly true in run-down, segregated areas and neighbourhoods, where the resident population might lose confidence and trust in the housing provider and/or the local administration. From the projects we looked at, it seems that the best way to overcome this problem is the establishment of a personal relationship with tenants, ideally having staff of the housing organisation to literally knock on every door and talk to the residents. Furthermore, logically people start trusting a housing provider when they see their opinions have a concrete impact: it is therefore extremely important to provide feedback on residents' requests and complaints and constantly prove that they are taken into consideration.

ADVANTAGES

Despite the challenges listed above, all case studies point to the same conclusion: residents' involvement has proven to be beneficial both for housing providers and inhabitants, and more in general for the quality of life in the local community. In some cases there are 'material' gains, although the most appreciated effects are often less tangible. Below we give an overview of the main positive outcomes listed by our correspondents for each case study.

1) Improved management

- **Making informed decisions:** the most frequently mentioned advantage deriving from involving residents in social housing is the capability to better identify and respond to their real needs and desires. This learning process is very important for the housing provider, as it allows implementing works and activities which really correspond to the expectations of residents, which guarantees sustainability on the long term.

- **Financial gains:** involving tenants in the decision making leads to financial advantages, both for residents (linked with the fact that they get to choose what expenditures should be prioritised and are not asked to pay for services which were not required) and for the housing organisation (saving in management and maintenance activities).

- **Better landlord-tenants relationship:** as a consequence of introducing participatory practices, landlord-tenants relationship can improve significantly, leading to 'smoother' management. In particular it leads to better acceptance of changes by the resident population, as it's been the case for instance in the urban renewal process of the 'difficult' Poligono Sur area in Sevilla. As highlighted by the government of the Basque Country, certain measures in the housing sector can be very difficult to implement if they cannot rely on a very high level of consensus.

- **Legitimacy towards partners/institutions:** a higher level of legitimacy is therefore an important outcome of residents' involvement for social housing providers. This legitimacy is expressed not only vis-à-vis the residents, but also other partners and institutions. In some cases this had led to profitable cooperation, as for instance in the case of the Dutch housing association Aert Swaens, which used the results of resident surveys as the basis for its discussions with the municipal authorities and all its other social partners, and subsequently the municipality started investing in some of the associations' projects.

2) Improved living environment

- **Better relations among neighbours:** taking part into local resident or tenant associations, such as the multicultural association Jari that was set up by social housing residents in Bologna, participating into a consultation forum or volunteering in the community provide residents with opportunities to get to know and appreciate each other, enhancing relations among neighbours and leading to increased social cohesion. This was evident for instance in Malmo in the significant decrease of vandalism and disturbances which has resulted from the urban renewal work started by the local municipal housing company.

- **Better quality of the homes and living environment:** when people feel a sense of pride and ownership in respect of where they live, they are more likely to care not only of their own homes but also common areas that are outside their homes.

3) Improved life of people

- **Increase in satisfaction and 'pride':** this results in increased users' satisfaction with the services and eventually can contribute to creating or re-establishing community pride and sense of belonging.

- **Personal development:** furthermore, contributing to the actual provision of services, for instance volunteering in the local social programmes such as in the case of student residents in social housing in Bilbao, or participating to the maintenance of green areas or to summer programmes such as those implemented in Hovsjö, can be a source of training and personal development for involved residents while at the same time being beneficial for the whole neighbourhood.

- **Freedom to express opinions:** last but not least, it should be noted that although this analysis necessarily focuses more on the point of view of providers (as respondents to the questionnaire are housing organisations), literature in this field often points to the fact that the right to participate per se is highly valued by the tenants. A survey carried out in the Basque Country confirms that 'among the most valued aspects by citizens, it is worth mentioning "freedom to express opinions" and "possibility to put forward proposals on new issues to be debated during this participation process"'. ✓





Different models of co-operative and mutual housing, united by them being democratically and legally owned and controlled by a service user membership, offer a wide range of potential for communities to choose from²⁹. Far from suggesting that these models should or can be transferred as such to the whole social housing sector, we nevertheless believe that they could provide an inspiration on how to capitalise on existing community resources, encourage residents initiative and their democratic participation.

They include, among others, housing cooperatives, cohousing, tenants' management organisations, community land trusts and self-build initiatives. We briefly present these models below, illustrated by concrete examples.

3.1 Housing co-operatives

A cooperative is 'an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically controlled enterprise'³⁰. A housing co-operative is a housing business – a consumer co-operative mutually owned by its members – that operates in accordance with the Co-operative Principles and Values.

Co-operative Values: co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

The seven internationally agreed Co-operative Principles (short form) are as follows:

1. Voluntary and Open membership
2. Democratic Member Control
3. Member Economic Participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training and Information
6. Co-operation among Co-operatives
7. Concern for Community



There are different models of housing cooperatives in the different countries. Further research on housing cooperatives within CECODHAS Housing Europe, together with ICA Housing, is on-going. Nevertheless our focus in this report is the central role members play in the management and running of a housing cooperative. To illustrate these features we have chosen an example from Italy, the **housing cooperative Abitare, in Milan (Italy)**.

The Administration Council consists of a number of representatives (minimum 5 and a maximum 23) elected by the assembly of all members. Representatives must be members of the cooperative for at least 3 months.

The Administration Council shall run the cooperative for the best achievement of the mutual aims and objectives, conducting all the acts of ordinary and extraordinary administration even if not explicitly requested by law or the cooperative constitutional charter. It elects the president and vice president and it controls the 5 areas of work: unit for finance and development of heritage; technical unit; quality unit; social unit and communication and information unit.

In order to facilitate the participation of all its members, the cooperative has also established various 'district

councils', which consist of 3 to 7 people elected among residents of a given neighbourhood. They represent the member residents living in the different districts and neighbourhoods and establish a direct link between them and the administration council. These councils submit proposals to the administration council, raise awareness of resident members on the respect of the statute and rules of the cooperative and inform them on all planned activities, participate in the planning of maintenance and other works in the neighbourhood, manage communal areas and premises favouring initiatives which are useful for members and their families, organise and manage social, cultural, leisure, sport activities. Furthermore, a local assembly is nominated to which all the members residents in the neighbourhood take part, so as to guarantee widespread participation in the decision making process. Besides housing, the cooperative also delivers social services like assistance for handicapped people; tax advisory services; consultancy, psychological and therapy services; health services etc. It also provides cultural activities, like IT, language courses; writing, theatre and music courses, training and orientation services and several libraries at disposal.

NOTES

29. The Commission on Co-operative and Mutual Housing (2009)
30. Definition provided by David Rodgers, President of ICA Housing



3.2 Co-Housing & Building communities

A cohousing community is a type of intentional community composed of private homes, supplemented by extensive common facilities. A cohousing community is planned, owned and managed by the residents, groups of people who want more interaction with their neighbours. Common facilities vary but usually include a large kitchen and dining room where residents can take turns cooking for the community. Other facilities may include a laundry, pool, child care facilities, offices, internet access, guest rooms, game room, TV room, tool room or a gym, car sharing, green areas and vegetable gardens. The sharing of goods and services implies benefits both in social and environmental terms. It saves the cost of living because it reduces waste, the use of external services, the cost of goods purchased in bulk. Furthermore, there is a strong emphasis on creating community and a sense of belonging.

Each cohousing project has a different history and its own characteristics, but there are many traits in common. One of the main features is participatory planning: future residents are directly involved in the design of the neighbours community they will live in, choosing the services to be shared and how to manage them. Furthermore, cohousing communities are elective, i.e. they aggregate people who choose to form a group, and are consolidated by creating a common shared vision. Cohouser communities are administered directly by the inhabitants, who also organize the maintenance and management of common areas. Roles and responsibilities for the management of shared spaces and resources are defined (usually in relation to the interests and skills of people), but the structure is non-hierarchical and decisions are taken on the basis of consensus.

Co-housing originated in Scandinavia in the 1960s, and today it is particularly widespread in Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, England, the United States, Canada, Australia and Japan³¹.

Very similar to the cohousing model is that of the so-called **building communities (Baugemeinschaften)**, a special form of housing that has become increasingly popular in Germany during recent years. This term describes a group of people that have decided to form their own community and want to create their living environment according to their own special requirements. The city of Hamburg is currently carrying out research on this model, and is working on a manual for building community projects which will help the city in its own urban planning³².

An example identified as a best practice by the municipality of Hamburg is the **Greves Garten building community project**, completed in 2006. Situated in the east of Hamburg, the property includes 5 multiple family dwellings and 4 detached houses, for a total of 30 residential units. Owner-occupied and rental units are combined, so that individual owners subsidize communally owned property. Residents contribute as much as possible with personal resources (anything we do ourselves helps to save money), and maintenance of the project is a joint task. The 21 families currently living in the area joined forces because of a desire for neighbourly living and mutual support, and to get affordable and quality housing with high energy performance. Based on the initiative of the residents-to-be, a number of technical measures were implemented to guarantee low consumption and environmental sustainability, including district heating, wood pellet heating, solar collector area, decentralised water heating via heat exchangers in the flats.

NOTES

- 31. www.cohousing.it
- 32. SUITE The Housing Project (2011)



3.3 Community land trusts

Community land trusts are locally based not-for-profit organisations that own land and property in trust for the benefit of the community. They acquire and manage land on behalf of the residents of a place-based community, while preserving affordability and preventing foreclosures for any housing located upon its land. A Community Land Trust is established under arrangements which are expressly designed to ensure that: any profits from its activities will be used to benefit the local community (otherwise than by being paid directly to members); individuals who live or work in the specified area have the opportunity to become members of the trust (whether or not others can also become members); the members of a trust control it. The CLT model as a vehicle for community development began in the United State. Over 200 community land trusts have now been established throughout the United States, with pilot schemes currently being carried out in both Canada and the UK³³.

An interesting example of community land trust is that of the **Champlain Housing Trust**, winner of the 2008 World Habitat Award. Established in Burlington, Vermont in 1984, the Champlain Housing Trust (CHT) was an early pioneer of the community land trust approach of providing affordable housing in perpetuity. CHT's homes are, on average, affordable to households earning only 57 per cent of the area's median income and it has over 2,200 properties for low-cost home ownership and rental. CHT's pioneering work on the community land trust

model provides a wide range of affordable housing for both rent and home ownership. In particular it seeks to: assure security of tenure to low and moderate income households through the collective control of land; protect vulnerable renters in gentrifying neighbourhoods; preserve access to home ownership for citizens of modest means; bring diverse elements of the community together. Originally established as the Burlington Community Land Trust in 1984, the organisation merged with another rental housing provider in the locality to form Champlain Housing Trust in 2006. To date, CHT has 430 homes in its single-family and condominium owner-occupied portfolio, as well as 1,500 rental properties, 115 cooperative homes and 64,000ft² of commercial, retail and office space. A further 120 apartments are under development. CHT acquires land and properties and sells or rents the property or other community facilities to an individual or corporate entity whilst retaining ownership of the underlying land. Through a perpetual ground lease CHT gives owner occupiers full rights to the land for the duration of their occupancy (and that of their heirs), but requires that equity is shared on resale, thus ensuring permanent affordability. Under the resale formula, only 25 per cent of any appreciation in the property value goes to the occupier³⁴.

NOTES

- 33. www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk
- 34. www.worldhabitatawards.org



3.4 Tenants Management Organisations (TMO)

Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) are a specific type of housing association in the UK. They are tenant-controlled organisations which provide a varying range of management and maintenance services to tenants under a Modular Management Agreement with their landlord. The term tenant management organisation encompasses both tenant management co-operatives and estate management boards. In both kinds of TMO, the landlord retains ownership and enters into a management agreement with the TMO, setting out the functional and geographical areas for which the TMO has responsibility. Resident members create an independent legal body and elect a committee to run the organisation, which is paid a management and maintenance allowance by the social landlord.

To put it simply, a TMO allows tenants and leaseholders to fully take on responsibility for housing management. Since the Housing (Rents and Subsidies) Act in 1975, local authorities have been able to delegate budgets and responsibility for housing management and maintenance to tenant management organisations. Section 16 of the 1986 Housing and Planning Act provided powers for the funding of advice and support to tenant groups. These grants have been used for feasibility studies and the development of TMOs. Furthermore, the Housing and Urban Development Act 1993 gave all tenants' groups covering 25 or more dwellings the right to manage (65% of TMOs have been set up since the introduction of the Right to Manage in 1993)³⁵. There are now some 230 TMOs across England, managing anything from a small number of flats in a single block to thousands of properties. Many TMOs, especially the more established ones, undertake a range of activities over and above their housing role

that contribute to the sustainability and empowerment of individuals and the communities in which they live.

Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation for instance is a TMO member of NHF, and it's responsible for the management of nearly 10,000 properties on behalf of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. In the early 1990s, the tenants and leaseholders of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea decided to pursue their legal right to manage their own homes. Following two separate ballots in 1994 and 1995, the Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) was established on 1st April 1996 and the responsibility for managing 9,760 properties passed from The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to the Tenant Management Organisation. The TMO is a membership organisation and over 4,000 residents have already signed up to become a member. The TMO is managed by a Board of Directors comprising of eight elected tenant and leaseholder members, four appointed Councillor members and three independent appointed other members. The aims of the organisation are numerous, as set out by strategic objectives in a business plan each year. The relationship between the TMO and the Council, which still owns the properties, is governed by a Management Agreement, which covers all areas of the landlord business. Whilst the TMO still enjoys a close working relationship with the Council, it is a completely separate company³⁶.

NOTES

35. Cairncross, Morrell, Darke, and Brownhill (2002)

36. www.kctmo.org.uk

3.5 Self-build



Self-build doesn't necessarily involve collective action. It is indeed widespread for individuals to embark in the building of their own home. Nevertheless, besides these strictly individual initiatives, some associations propose to assist households in building their home. In this case the association usually brings together a group of future inhabitants and

each one of them participates to planning and works, according to his/her competences.

A particularly interesting example of this type of initiatives is **the Igloo Programme** in France, characterised by an approach integrating housing and employment. Based on the idea of involving people in building their own home, reducing the costs of construction, the Igloo programme is the result of a long cooperation between USH and its member federations, the national federation of regional associations (FNAR), the PACT movement for better housing conditions, the credit institution Caisse centrale de la mutualité sociale agricole, and five trade union confederations. The starting point for

an Igloo project is always the household's needs. The project implies an integrated action for a global - social and professional- integration. Beneficiaries are vulnerable households in a situation of housing need.

The household member who participates to the construction of its future home is paid a salary, either by an enterprise (in the framework of social clauses) or by a work integration social enterprises. At the end of the works he/she can benefit of a job training, get qualifications and/or be directly employed by the company³⁸.

NOTES

37. FNSCHLM - USH (2011)



SOURCES

- Cairncross, Morrell, Darke, and Brownhill (2002). Tenants Managing. An Evaluation of Tenant Management Organisations in England. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, London.
- Commission on Co-operative and Mutual Housing (2009). Bringing democracy home. www.ccmh.coop
- FNSCHLM - USH (2011). Accompagner les projets d'habitat cooperative et participative.
- SUITE The Housing Project (2011). Social and Urban Inclusion Through Housing. A synthesis of the local action plans of the partners. URBACT, European Programme for Sustainable Urban Development.
- www.cohousing.it
- www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk
- www.kctmo.org.uk
- www.worldhabitatawards.org



CECODHAS-Housing Europe is the federation of public, cooperative and social housing, a network of national and regional federations gathering over 41,000 throughout Europe. Together the 45 members in 19 EU Member States manage 27 million dwellings.

CECODHAS-Housing Europe members work together for a Europe that provides access to decent and affordable housing for all in communities which are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable and where all are enabled to reach their full potential.

The European Union should in the future:

- Invest in social innovation; local social capital and social infrastructure by promoting all forms of enterprises and local initiatives.
- Lead the green industrial revolution by promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy in housing.
- Commit to ensuring that all citizens have access to a decent and affordable home and a life in dignity by actively promoting policies to implement it.

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