

The bright side and the dark side of **Participation in cohousing**

HousingLIN Summit

27 February, Yael Arbell



Overview

- CLH, cohousing and participation
- Participation and social connection:
 creating the community through being in community
- Participation, inclusion and diversity: empowering the already empowered?
- Conditions for effective, inclusive and equitable participation



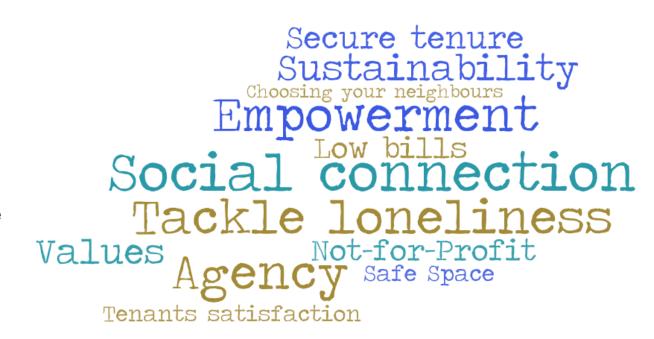
Community-led Housing

- Not for profit
- meets local needs
- developed and managed by members of the community
- Cooperatives, CLTs, self-help, cohousing
- Ownership models vary



Benefits of CLH

- Some need these more urgently than others
- some can access these more easily than others
- And some just get these in other ways!



Cohousing

- Intentional community
- Private homes, shared facilities
- 5-40 households
- High level participation (design, management)
- social connection
- predominantly private
- predominantly middleclass



Participation and social connection

- Creating the community through being in community
- Connection and belonging
- Suitable housing
- Empowerment and voice
- Tolerance and empathy



Participation and social exclusion

- Communities have conflicting values and interests
- "The usual suspects"
- Resources: skills, time, money, connections...
- Subtle forms of exclusion



Getting the balance right



Empowering the empowered?

[CLH] is "an empowerment that the housing system doesn't often give you, and that's why middle class people are very drawn to it. And you know, you do end up with it being quite white and middle class because they're used to being empowered in other areas of their life and then it's only like, "well, actually, why don't have the same empowerment with housing? Ohh, hang on, I can!"

(CLH housing advisor)

Cultural capital: subtle barriers

Skills and life experiences implicitly / explicitly required for meaningful participation in cohousing

- Education and language
- Activism and volunteering
- Literacy and the digital divide (minutes, emails, phone apps...)
- Social networks

Planning for inclusion

Each community faces different challenges. To be inclusive, CLH must develop:

- homes that are affordable, accessible and enable people to age in place
- communities that are welcoming and tolerant
- Management structures
 and processes that are inclusive, empowering and accessible





Thank you

Yael Arbell y.arbell@shu.ac.uk

