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Scaling-up or going-viral: comparing self-help housing and community land trust facilitation

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Abstract

This paper explores two sector-based case studies of social innovation in community-led housing that have taken root in the last ten years: community land trusts (CLTs) set up to ensure access to affordable homes in perpetuity and self-help housing organisations set up to bring empty homes back into use. These innovations benefit from a groundswell of support, as their specialised local focus and people-centre approach to housing has strong resonance with policy agendas of localism and community empowerment in England. Yet to take root such innovations need more than rhetorical support; they require practical and ideological strengthening to secure flows of resources and legitimacy required for survival alongside professionalised and better resourced forms of organisation. This paper compares the forms of support provided by intermediary organisations that have been used to facilitate the growth and diffusion of these community-led housing models. It describes how the CLT sector has scaled up to create a formal institutional framework operating at different spatial scales to support locally-rooted community groups and considers the implications of this for the self-help housing sector, which has shown a preference for 'viral' solutions that focus on small-scale projects and community leadership. While intermediary support is clearly of importance, there are tensions in its provision, as sectors that scale up may begin to question local independence and dilute community ethos, while viral solutions may face challenges in accessing technical skills and resources without becoming overburdened or diverted from initial objectives. The paper concludes that while partnerships with technical experts that act as intermediaries may be crucial for the diffusion and expansion of CLTs and self-help housing, there are tensions in accessing technical skills and resources in a manner that maintains the local scale, accountability and unique added value of community-led housing.

Keywords

Community-led housing; facilitation; innovation; localism; community land trust (CLT); self-help-housing.

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1. Introduction to community-based self-help

Community-based self-help has held popular currency and influence in the fields of housing and regeneration for many years, ranging from state-authorised programmes of participation and empowerment to bottom-up community movements based on collective organisation and mutual aid (Wann, 1995; Burns and Taylor, 1998; Home Office, 1999; Taylor, 2012). This paper explores community-based self-help that is undertaken as a collective enterprise by groups of people at neighbourhood level in order to address common problems and shared concerns based on their 'lived experience' of local issues (Richardson, 2008; Archer and Vanderhoven, 2010). Self-help groups involved in this activity may be distinguished from others by their autonomous initiation by local people, by their engagement in tackling issues that public or private providers may not directly address, and by undertaking 'direct action to address a real issue affecting a community' (Archer and Vanderhoven, 2010: 8).

Different forms of self-help have a long history but have most recently been reflected in the Coalition Government's commitment to localism and community empowerment. There are policy continuities between these agendas and those of previous governments, as these localist reforms seek to empower communities to shape their neighbourhoods, open up public services to actors in the private sector and civil society, and to promote social action based on active citizenship, volunteering and self-help (Cabinet Office, 2010). In order to achieve this a series of policies and reforms have been introduced in recent years, including legislative change to encourage community ownership of assets, greater engagement of local people in the design and implementation of planning policies, and support for new forms of mutual and community governance in public life. This reflects a continuing reconfiguration of welfare regimes whereby actors in the private and third sectors are encouraged to become more involved in social welfare delivery, a process especially pronounced in the context of recent fiscal austerity and the state's continued retreat from direct welfare provision (Skelcher, 2000; Fyfe, 2005; Featherstone et al., 2012). Similar trends can be observed not just in England (the main focus of this paper) but in the different jurisdictions of the UK, where various forms of community empowerment, engagement and participation in public life are promoted, albeit with subtle differences in design and implementation and in the labels applied to these activities (for example, 'big society' being an almost exclusively English label) (see Danson and Whittam, 2011 and Alcock, 2012).

Community-based self-help is valued not only for tackling particular problems and issues that affect local communities, but for its potential to empower citizens and communities through greater influence and control over local issues. Following Smiles (1859) who originally distinguished 'help from within which invariably invigorates' from 'help from without which is often enfeebling in its effects', self-help (or 'help from within') is depicted as autonomous from state initiation and control (Burns and Taylor, 1998). Support for self-help, as part of the wider school of civil society, is premised on several presumed benefits, including its ability to meet social needs unmet by the state or market and its potential to tackle social exclusion, encourage mutual aid and revive local democracy by engaging local people in the design, delivery and maintenance of social welfare (Fyfe, 2005; Archer, 2009;

Buser, 2013). Yet, while some value self-help for its independence from public and private sector interests and contrast it with top-down interventions (Burns and Taylor, 1998; Taylor, 2012), others have identified the need to consider external support in enabling self-help to succeed. In particular, research has pointed to external relationships including with the state and public policy, which may have a role in creating the conditions for self-help activity to flourish (Wann, 1995; Maloney et al., 2000). This is often noted in relation to problems faced by self-help groups, as resources may be differentiated within and between communities, with the so called 'civic core' of active volunteers more likely to be found in affluent than poor areas, highlighting limitations of reliance on the presumed latent capacities of self-help groups (Mohan, 2011). Berner and Phillips (2005) note that self-help often requires external enabling support in the form of stable, long-term and targeted financial and technical support, while Archer (2009: 5) observes that 'aspirations for self-help will not be realised unless it is appropriately resourced and supported'.

From this perspective, self-help can better tackle public policy issues if its operational environment is actively constructed by the resources and support of 'help from without'. This may include financial support but also technical inputs from community support and infrastructure organisations, which have existed in various forms for a number of years, serving different niche organisations and sub-sectors as well as operating at different geographical scales. They range from large-scale national infrastructure organisations that provide political representation and lobby for their membership to individual community development workers performing local enabling roles for community empowerment, with a contemporary development being the state-supported Community Organisers programme to support social action (Taylor, 2012). These different forms of intermediary organisations share a common purpose of assisting groups in overcoming social, economic, practical and political challenges that may otherwise hinder their success, though this is achieved in different ways according to the field they work in, geographic scale at which they operate and groups in civil society they are created to serve. There has been significant investment into forms of capacity-building and community engagement in the third sector, and this was particularly important under the 1997-2010 Labour Government's third sector project (Alcock, 2010). These initiatives often focused on the delivery of formal training and 'skilling-up' of organisations expected to take on mainstream roles in public service delivery. However, as McCabe and Phillimore (2012) highlight, these programmes and associated evaluations tend to focus on formalised community organisations with paid staff and large income rather than 'self-help' groups (Kail, Keen and Lumley, 2011; IVAR, 2011). They note that:

Community groups and activities that are 'below the radar', that is with very small incomes, no/few formal structures and dependent on volunteers, have largely been omitted from consideration. (McCabe and Phillimore, 2012: 3)

This would be applicable to self-help groups operating in the housing field. Little research has been published about the expansion and diffusion of community-led housing and in particular how new sectors are institutionalised and created. The number of CLTs and self-help housing organisations has grown in the last decade. There are now around 100 organisations operating in each sector, and they have each recently benefited from state funded grant programmes totalling £25-30 million nationally. CLTs have so far developed a total of 406 homes constructed or in planning nationally, while the self-

help housing sector aims to bring an additional 1,600 empty properties (with 3,700 bedrooms) into use by 2015. The following section reviews the role of intermediary organisations in resourcing and supporting forms of self-help at the micro level before considering in more detail their role in supporting community housing.

1.1. The role of intermediary organisations in overcoming self-help challenges

A common challenge for self-help groups operating at neighbourhood level is the way in which they are able to access the technical skills, knowledge and resources they need to deliver their aims and objectives effectively (see Aiken et al., 2011; Skerratt and Hall, 2011; McCabe and Phillimore, 2012). While state support for self-help often places significant faith in the latent capacities of volunteers, one of the key issues faced by policymakers is how best self-help opportunities can be spread as widely and as evenly as possible, as skills, resources and opportunities are often unevenly distributed within and between communities (Wann, 1995; Mohan, 2011). One of the key roles for intermediary bodies may be to identify and meet the support needs of individual self-help groups, helping to connect them with methods of meeting and overcoming tasks that demand specialist expertise (Archer and Vanderhoven, 2010).

This also relates to the need for self-help groups to be connected with resources and decision-making processes that may be mediated by the state and/or professional actors. While contemporary policy commits to supporting community-based self-help, in practice working relationships between self-help groups and the state may be distant and oppositional. As with other forms of social innovation, community-based self-help may be enacted via processes of opposition and resistance and can often emerge as a critique of existing institutional systems and their logics, norms and inability to deliver social and environmental outcomes (Nicholls and Murdock, 2012). Self-help groups may seek to disrupt and challenge the role of the state and its agencies, yet they may simultaneously seek their resources and support, as without this their activity may be stunted, particularly in times of fiscal austerity (Wann, 1995; Kane and Allen, 2011). Archer and Vanderhoven (2010) advocate the role of independent intermediary organisations in reconciling the conflicting logics of self-help groups and the state by mediating between competing agendas and fostering closer working relationships. Intermediaries may perform a role that balances the resource needs of self-help groups, their requirements for strategic legitimisation and technical assistance, without diluting the underlying autonomy and independence that distinguish self-help activity and help to create social value.

The work of intermediary bodies may therefore be described as a boundary-spanning approach designed to remove barriers to self-help activity, in part by identifying and increasing access to resources and technical expertise, but also by enabling and brokering relationships between partners that may otherwise have conflicting institutional logics and objectives. The various functions that this may include, and the scales at which these may be performed, are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Functions of intermediary organisations

Function	Scale	Audience
Technical advice and guidance (financial, legal, organisational)	Neighbourhood	Self-help groups
Identification of resource needs and sources	Neighbourhood	Self-help groups
Dissemination of self-help best practice as a local solution for neighbourhoods	Neighbourhood	Potential self-help groups
Identification and brokerage of potential enabling partnerships	Sub-regional	Local professionals, authorities and resource holders
Advocacy and promotion of self-help	Sub-regional	Local professionals, authorities and resource holders
Intermediation between local and broader agendas	Sub-regional/national	Local and national government/professional frameworks
Political representation and lobbying	National	National government and its agencies

While one function of intermediary bodies may be to mediate between competing agendas and priorities, their role may itself be subject to tensions and contradictions. Tensions include the danger of civic action being negotiated between political elites and community leaders and representatives, rather than connecting with grassroots local activity which it purports to enable (Maloney et al., 2000: 812). In relation to the acquisition of technical skills and expertise, McCabe and Phillimore (2012) observe that top-down provision of technical support and formal training may not be the best way to support locally-rooted community groups, who often acquire skills through a more viral horizontal approach of 'seeing and doing'. Logics may collide through isomorphic processes that undermine the legitimacy of new institutions by (re)shaping them in line with the norms and practices of existing and dominant institutions (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Isomorphic processes have long been observed in different parts of the voluntary and community sector, with professionalisation and co-option a particular issue, shifting from innovative activity that creates social value towards conformance with the logics and priorities of public funders (Harris, 2010). This has been evidenced in the housing field where a civil society movement of housing associations in the 1970s has for the most part been transformed into a large-scale professionalised movement of hybrid organisations seen to be out of touch with their original community roots (Mullins 2010; Purkis, 2010). Similarly, difficulties can be observed in the social enterprise field, with tensions evident between mission-related goals of social purpose and ongoing resource requirements led by business logics (Teasdale, 2012).

The remainder of this paper discusses the role of intermediaries in supporting community-led housing innovations that have been spreading in practice in England in recent years. The section that follows details the methodology used to collect the information on which the paper's findings and observations are based. The following sections then look at how intermediaries perform certain

functions in order to facilitate access to the technical skills, resources and networks required to advance forms of community-based self-help in the housing field. In particular, the discussion focuses on the role of a strong institutional framework through which the community land trust (CLT) model has been replicated in different areas of the country, and highlights the implications of this for the self-help housing sector and the different models being adopted as that sector undertakes a period of expansion and replication.

2. Methodology

This paper draws on two separate strands of work conducted on CLTs (Moore and Northcott 2010; Moore, 2012; Moore and McKee, 2012), and self-help housing (Mullins 2010; Mullins et al., 2011a and 2011b; Teasdale et al., 2011), pulling together the findings of each to explore the importance and effect of intermediary organisations for forms of community-led housing.

The material on CLTs was collected as part of a three-year research project conducted by the lead author from 2008-2011. This research looked at the growth and development of the CLT sector in England and Wales, with a particular focus on the purpose, function and operation of CLTs. One aspect of this research looked at the role of intermediary organisations in the CLT sector – from hereon in referred to as umbrella CLTs – in facilitating the development of community-led housing. The study featured 30 semi-structured interviews with representatives of CLTs, umbrella CLTs and partnering organisations, housing associations, local authorities and rural housing enablers, as well as engagement with and participation in practitioner networks. To supplement this material, this paper has drawn on secondary resources referenced in the text, including the annual report of the National CLT Network and associated material published by the Network and umbrella CLTs since the conclusion of the primary research in 2011.

The material on self-help housing builds on a series of outputs from research conducted by the Third Sector Research Centre on self-help housing in partnership with Jon Fitzmaurice at Self-Help-Housing.Org and with the Building and Social Housing Foundation (Mullins, 2010; Teasdale et al., 2011; Mullins et al., 2011a). These outputs presented evidence drawn from a literature review and national stakeholder interviews and eight case studies of a variety of models of self-help housing in different local contexts, which in turn informed a consultation event hosted by the Building and Social Housing Foundation in December 2010. This consultation was attended by a number of policymakers, funders, enablers and self-help housing practitioners in order to identify the critical success factors and barriers to self-help housing, which were summarised in outputs produced by Pattison et al. (2011) and Mullins et al. (2011a). Further work is in progress tracking the impact of the Empty Homes Community Grants Programme (EHCGP) which in 2012 provided £30 million funding over three years to 95 locally based self-help groups, and on the subsequent development of the sector. This paper builds on the observations made in these outputs to draw parallels between the facilitation and resource needs of CLTs and self-help housing, and by doing so it identifies the important functions performed by intermediary organisations.

3. The evolution of self-help housing

Self-help housing 'involves groups of local people bringing back into use empty properties that are in limbo, awaiting decisions about their future use or their redevelopment' (Self-Help-Housing.Org, accessed 28 August 2012). Self-help approaches to bringing empty properties back into use have been popular for many years, though activity fluctuates according to conditions of property markets and directions of housing policy. In the 1970s and 1980s short-life use programmes supported by local authorities and housing associations coupled with municipalisation of private sector properties in disrepair enabled residents to undertake repairs to empty homes. Cutbacks in funding to bring properties into use had led to squatting, to which support for methods of self-help could be seen as a formal response (Mullins, 2010). It is thought that self-help housing activity declined in scale after the 1980s due to the changing focus of housing policy, with a demunicipalisation of local authority housing achieved through policies such as the right to buy and large-scale stock transfers and a scaling up of the housing association sector drawing it away from interest in small-scale neighbourhood renewal projects such as empty homes. However, reflecting the informal and spontaneous nature of self-help approaches, self-help housing groups continued to form 'below the radar' throughout the 1990s. The popularisation of work integration social enterprise in the 2000s created new opportunities for self-help housing projects as a vehicle for employment and training initiatives in construction skills.

Information on the scale of the self-help housing sector has been limited. In 2009 it was estimated that the sector was small in relation to its potential if effective support were available:

At present there are only about 50 self-help housing projects in England and Wales making use of empty property. They vary from those managing only a few tenancies to those managing several hundred. However, there could easily be 10 times as many projects if people had the information and necessary funding was available to enable to set something up. (Self-Help-Housing.Org – cited by Mullins, 2010)

Self-help housing groups typically bring empty homes back into use on a temporary management basis pending decisions over their longer term use, though permanent transfer of properties to community ownership can also occur (Pattison et al., 2011). There is also diversity between projects, ranging from smaller informal groups managing a few tenancies, to those that are organised and developed under the auspices of larger groups such as development trusts and social enterprise. Mullins (2010: 9) notes that the 50 or so self-help housing groups identified in 2009-10 were unevenly spread across the UK, with clusters in areas such as London, Yorkshire and the North East, but not in areas such as the West Midlands and Liverpool (despite local traditions of community action, voluntarism and co-operative housing). This may be due to fundamentally different drivers across the country. In London and the South East the shortage of affordable housing created opportunities for self-help and co-operative approaches, while in the Midlands and the North the availability of empty homes provided a resource for community employment, training initiatives and housing projects for young people. Unevenness in regional support networks and access to support may have also contributed to the presence of self-help groups in different areas, as well as peer mentoring between existing successful projects and new groups in a local area (Mullins, 2010).

There has been a growth in political interest in self-help housing not only for its fit with cuts in regeneration expenditure and contemporary policy emphasis on community engagement in the production, management and ownership of housing and civic space, but also for its potential contribution to the number of empty homes in England. There are thought to be over 700,000 empty homes (Homes and Communities Agency, 2012) and bringing these back into use is a key priority of housing policy. Renewal of empty homes may not only make a significant contribution to the supply of housing, but also offers multiple benefits to public policy in terms of neighbourhood regeneration and employment and training opportunities for local and disadvantaged people (Mullins, 2010; Pattison et al., 2011; Teasdale et al., 2011). Self-help housing initiatives have recently been supported by the government as a method to tackle the problem of empty homes, most notably through the introduction of the ring-fenced Community Grants programme (EHCGP) of £30m within a wider budget of £100m for an Empty Homes Programme lasting from 2012-15 (Mullins et al., 2011b). While the informality of many groups limits our understanding of the scale of the sector, the EHCGP was accessed by 95 projects in 2012, indicating growing interest in self-help housing approaches. As the next section describes, this expansion of activity and acquisition of finance is due in part to the intermediary service provided by a national facilitator, but this recent growth also poses challenges for the future organisation and provision of this support.

3.1. The expansion and diffusion of self-help housing

Recent research conducted on self-help housing has highlighted the enabling factors and barriers that support or impede its development, which in turn inform how self-help housing may be replicated in more communities across the country (Mullins, 2010; Mullins et al., 2011a; Pattison et al., 2011).

Mullins (2010) identified five key resource requirements for self-help housing projects: properties, funding, workforce, residents, and local partners. Exploration of enabling factors and barriers highlighted the particular importance of local partners who were usually a conduit for all of the other resources required (Mullins et al., 2011a). Despite the majority of empty properties being in the private sector, most self-help projects have had greater success in negotiating temporary use of empty social housing stock from local authorities and housing associations with whom local links were generally greater. However, moves to asset management approaches in the social housing sector were making negotiations more difficult and the importance of having established relationships with the right people in larger housing associations was becoming more important (Mullins et al., 2011a).

Earlier research has identified examples of tensions between self-help groups and housing associations over the rental levels charged for leased properties and the arrangements for handback at the end of lease periods. In one case a long established large scale housing provider that itself had its origins in neighbourhood renewal caused significant financial problems for a self-help co-operative by substantially increasing rentals in the 18 month prior to handback, thereby reducing the reserves available for re-investment in replacement properties (Mullins et al., 2011a). These kinds of incident had reduced the trust of some self-help organisations in partnerships with housing associations and led to the importance placed by the sector on the empty homes programme being opened to non-approved bodies (approved bodies being registered housing associations), eventually leading to a

separate EHCGP ring-fenced to community-led non-approved bodies as discussed below. Moreover, an explicit decision was taken to focus the EHCGP on empty private sector properties, thereby requiring projects to move beyond the easier to access opportunities harnessed by partnerships with social housing providers to negotiate leases with, or in lower cost areas purchase, properties from private property owners.

Building on this research, Pattison et al., (2011) identified success factors including the presence of a committed and dedicated group of people to co-ordinate local projects, access to public and private property for renovation, a viable funding model, and an identified need for local housing that the project aims to meet. Drawing the findings of these projects together, a common theme of research into self-help housing has been the fundamental role for partner organisations that can facilitate access to resources and provide technical inputs to support projects. Teasdale et al., (2011: 24) summarised this with the observation that ‘the development of partnerships appears to offer the key to the future of self-help housing’, as without them local groups find it difficult to source necessary resources to progress their projects.

While the local focus of self-help housing is a particular strength and attraction of the approach, it has required a national intermediary – Self-Help-Housing.Org – to support local groups in developing these partnerships and accessing resources. For a number of years this intermediary body has fulfilled many of the key intermediary functions described in Table 1, including the provision of information and advice to community groups as to how they can approach self-help housing and connecting them with the appropriate stakeholders and resources to facilitate new projects (also see Pattison et al., 2011). In addition to providing direct technical advice and support, the national intermediary also provides a platform for the exchange of ideas and good practice between local groups, as it encourages peer-to-peer learning between projects to stimulate many new individual self-help housing groups. This helps to retain the local focus and people-centred approach to housing renovation.

A further role performed by the national intermediary involves engaging with national government to develop a strategic view for self-help housing that is wider than local context. Small local organisations can find it difficult to engage with national policy issues which can in turn impede access to key resources. The importance of this role is shown by the intermediary’s successful lobbying for the EHCGP as part of the government’s empty home funding programme (DCLG, 2012). Previously finance had only been available for approved housing providers that were registered with the Homes and Communities Agency (known as the HCA, the national funder of affordable housing in England), with several community groups unlikely to meet the criteria or have the capacity to become approved providers. Successful lobbying from the intermediary supported by the evidence collected in research conducted by TSRC and the Building and Social Housing Foundation created a more proportionate registration system for community groups to access grant funding. Most of the 95 grant allocations made through EHCGP were in fact to non-registered providers, and many to non-specialist community-based groups, highlighting how the intermediary has been able to lobby and represent local groups nationally in order to address barriers shared by diverse self-help groups around the country.

In essence, the recent expansion of self-help housing activity has been stimulated by what we term a 'viral' approach to intermediary support and facilitation of community-based self-help projects. This is characterised by a loose network of support, led by a national intermediary that aims to broker partnerships and stimulate the exchange of good practice between projects at a local level, aiming to expand the number of locally-rooted groups rather than conventional scaling-up of existing organisations. This work is continuing as part of the EHCGP, as the Self-Help-Housing.Org intermediary is leading a capacity-building programme in partnership with the Housing Associations Charitable Trust. This programme is targeted at the 95 self-help organisations that received grant awards via the EHCGP and is informed by a survey undertaken by the intermediary to assess the support needs of these groups. This support aims to continue this viral approach by:

- continuing to develop regional networks to facilitate peer-to-peer learning and knowledge exchange between more projects, and to establish relations with local authorities and housing associations that can provide technical inputs and access to property;
- offering advice and support to individual projects covering organisational models, project management, legal assistance, logistical support, and brokerage with partners;
- continuing to develop and update online resources to inform self-help housing groups, including the hosting of web tutorials and master classes;
- disseminating regular information and updates on self-help housing to relevant stakeholders, continuing the promotion and advocacy of the concept.

The provision of dedicated and accessible funding for self-help housing organisations affords greater recognition and new opportunities to groups that have previously operated below the radar of government and have been reliant on ad hoc support and resource acquisition. This recent expansion in activity, along with the opportunities created by the scale of the empty homes problem, poses new challenges to the way in which intermediary support for self-help groups is organised and provided. While Self-Help-Housing.Org continues to lead the viral approach to the facilitation of local groups, its resources and capacity are limited and have recently been focused through new grant support to build the capacity of the 95 organisations that have successfully obtained funding in the EHCGP. These groups tend to be more 'project ready' than start-ups, having successfully applied and obtained funding. However, many of these groups are new entrants to the sector and may take some time to acquire properties, particularly as a result of programme requirements to source from outside of existing social housing stock. Support for this large cohort of newly funded groups may arguably be at the expense of non-funded groups who are not 'project ready'.

Additionally, the limitations of a viral approach may be that self-help housing continues to be unevenly spread, as without adequate resourcing and support peer-to-peer learning may only take place in locations where self-help housing is already a popular approach and where there is capacity to provide this service. Research is currently underway at the Third Sector Research Centre to map the expressions of interest and grant funding from the EHCGP. While this will develop further understanding of the geography of self-help housing, a clear issue raised by the recent expansion and

diffusion of self-help housing approaches is how best the effects of the national intermediary's work in supporting a viral approach to the sector's development can be amplified and expanded. Examples of this have included participation of an established group from the north in advising newly established groups in the Midlands at a regional support event.

In this phase of rapid growth, self-help housing shares many enabling factors, barriers and challenges with the recent history of the CLT sector. CLTs moved from the experimentation of a national demonstration programme from 2006-2008 initially involving a small number of organisations, to replication of CLT activity in many rural and (to a so far lesser extent) urban communities across the country. This has been supported by the emergence of a formalised institutional framework that has supported the grassroots development of CLTs. The following section explores the importance of this facilitation to the development of CLTs, drawing upon primary and secondary data sources, before comparing this with self-help housing and considering future implications for the development of the wider community-led housing sector.

4. The creation of a community land trust sector

Like self-help housing groups, CLTs are initiated on a voluntary basis by local people committed to housing and neighbourhood regeneration through community-based self-help. CLTs are formed in rural and urban communities to tackle local problems related to insufficient housing supply, gentrification and displacement of local people, and speculative private house building at the expense of affordability. They offer an innovative approach to housing ownership, as they construct new-build affordable homes sold on a shared ownership basis with equity shared between the CLT and income-eligible households. Unlike conventional models of shared ownership, covenants are attached to the future use and resale of the home that allow CLTs to control and suppress resale prices in order to ensure individual properties remain affordable. CLTs offer a vehicle through which local people can become engaged in designing solutions to problems in local housing markets and neighbourhoods, and they typically afford prominent roles to local residents in democratic governance structures (Moore and McKee, 2012). Described as a 'largely theoretical model' in 2006 (HM Treasury, 2006), the number of CLTs has grown with more than 100 thought to be in existence and they are now recognised by government as a delivery vehicle not only for housing but for broader agendas of localism and community empowerment (Paterson and Dayson, 2011). This is due in part to the strong institutional framework that has grown to support CLTs in the last decade.

4.1. Moving from experimentation to replication: the CLT national demonstration and empowerment programmes

The wave of interest in CLTs in the last decade has its roots in a national demonstration programme that operated from 2006 to 2008, itself a product of scoping research and investigation published by the New Economics Foundation in 2003 (Conaty et al., 2003) and the Countryside Agency (2005). This research examined the potential for CLTs to resolve housing difficulties and was led by a team of consultants linked to Community Finance Solutions (CFS); an independent action research unit based

at the University of Salford, which subsequently led and administered the national demonstration programme from 2006 to 2008 and the follow-up empowerment programme from 2008 to 2010.

The national demonstration programme (2006-2008) was funded by the Housing Corporation, Carnegie UK Trust and the Higher Education Funding Council, with the consultants at CFS supported to provide technical assistance to communities seeking to form and develop CLTs in their local area. The purpose of this was to help CLTs overcome a series of definitional, financial and organisational problems that hindered access to external support and resources and ultimately limited their initial expansion. Essentially, this work aimed to provide intermediary services to CLTs similar to those described in Table 1 by connecting them with parties able to provide social, financial and strategic resources for their development. However, from an early stage in CLT development, it became apparent that the creation of a wider CLT network was also an intention of the promotion and advocacy of the CLT concept. The report published by the Countryside Agency in 2005 stated that:

A CLT network should be considered to disseminate good practice and promote public understanding and acceptance of this mutual approach to ownership of land and property. (Countryside Agency, 2005: 53)

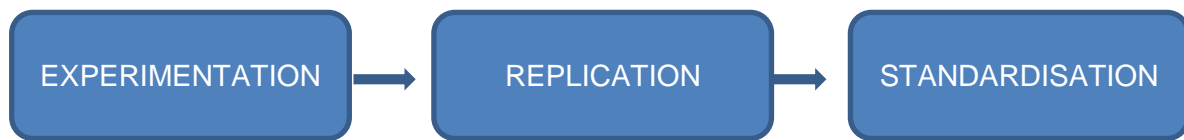
As such, the demonstration and empowerment programmes were designed not only to provide direct technical assistance to CLTs, but to provide external support over a specific period of time that would create the conditions for them to flourish independently. This is reflected in the objectives of the initial demonstration programme, described by Aird (2009) as being to:

- promote and influence the creation of CLTs;
- increase understanding of CLTs and capacity to support their development;
- encourage housing associations to support CLTs;
- provide technical assistance to CLTs during their inception.

These objectives were achieved in different ways. First, the programmes were able to facilitate the hosting of training events and production of documentation targeted at different audiences and stakeholders relevant to CLTs. This included seminars and documents that showcased best practice and covered key themes such as the planning process, governance, sources of finance, community involvement, and issues to consider in housing construction and management. Importantly these events acted not only as capacity-building for new and existing CLTs but also as awareness raising and promotional activity for potential partners such as local authorities and housing associations. As will be discussed in following sections, this has led to the direct involvement of external partners in the creation, formation and resourcing of CLTs.

Second, the programmes led by CFS aimed to create a 'community of practice' to support the establishment and growth of CLTs, built around a common identity and a framework of intermediary support. In this respect the role of CFS, as described by Aird (2009), was one that would facilitate experimentation of CLT activity, lead to wider replication, and ultimately to standardisation of best practice.

Figure 1: CLT Strategic Support adapted from Aird (2009: 11)



The development of a CLT sector therefore not only involved the local CLTs on the ground, but the active role of consultancy bodies and intermediaries in order to help advance their plans:

While the individual CLTs must proceed at the development stage they are at, CFS (or another consultancy body) can intervene at crucial points in order to take the movement to the next stage. A pioneer project may be hard work as 'experimentation' but subsequent projects can learn from this experience and it becomes easier. (Aird, 2009: 11)

The targeted training events and seminars aimed to contribute to this alongside the provision of technical advice and support. Standardised specialist documentation (such as legal documents and guidance on the various stages of establishing and governing a CLT) was provided which on the one hand provided an easily accessible resource for communities, and on the other served to create a common and consistent language for CLTs in different communities to speak to external partners while retaining their local focus and emphasis on community ownership.

This shared identity was further developed by the insertion of a legal definition of CLTs in the 2008 Housing and Regeneration Act. This clarified the central principles of CLTs and sought to improve public understanding and recognition of the model in order to facilitate access to greater resources (Aird, 2009: 7). The creation of a common legal identity was also thought necessary in order to highlight what makes CLTs different from other housing providers, as CFS described in their response to a 2008 government consultation on the future development of the CLT sector:

CLTs differ fundamentally from public housing providers and should be treated differently. They are more than just a vehicle for affordable housing provision, but are also vehicles for empowering both urban and rural communities. They put communities in the driving seat of their own economic renewal and allow them to set their own priorities from the bottom-up. (Community Finance Solutions, 2008: 3)

The observation that CLTs should be treated differently to other housing providers was partly influenced by difficulties in obtaining public subsidy, as well as by more general issues of definitional ambiguity experienced during the demonstration programme. Accessing sufficient finance for the construction of new homes was one of the main impediments to CLT development during the national demonstration and empowerment programmes. Many CLTs sought public subsidy from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) in the same way that housing associations would do so, but they were required to undertake a complex and demanding process of becoming a registered provider with the relevant regulatory agency. This was common procedure for housing associations applying for subsidy (although the number of new registrations after 2000 had been very low and mainly limited to

local authority stock transfers), but for CLTs the process was thought to undermine and deter their small-scale community-led initiatives due to the burden it placed on volunteers. For instance, monitoring of performance and competence of housing providers in receipt of subsidy was thought to be onerous for CLTs and insensitive to the scale of their schemes, often numbering fewer than 10 homes as opposed to conventional large-scale developments that public subsidy often funds.

This illustrates some of the conflicting logics and tensions that existed between CLTs and external partners early in the sector's development. By enshrining a shared identity for CLTs in law, with the definition describing their principles of community leadership, ownership and future use of assets for community benefit, it was thought that CLTs would be better placed to make a case for more suitable and proportionate resources and support. This helped to create what Kelly (2009) terms a 'common conceptual construct' for the development of CLTs. Using evidence from the US, Kelly argues that a conceptual construct for community ownership models is a necessary step to enable acceptance within existing legal, financial and political frameworks. The 'language and framing' of a movement through a common identity is critical if it is to be incorporated into these frameworks and subsequently expanded, diffused and taken to scale' (Kelly, 2009: 11). In creating a conceptual framework for community movements to line up behind, Kelly also points to the importance of funding templates and networks of technical assistance easily accessible by community organisations (Kelly, 2009: 16).

While CFS initially provided technical assistance to CLTs through the national demonstration and empowerment programmes, their involvement was always likely to be time-limited. As such these programmes aimed to create the legal and conceptual frameworks which would enable CLT activity to flourish and eventually be expanded and replicated beyond the work that had been led by CFS. A dedicated charitable funding stream was created in 2008 to support this. The CLT Fund was launched by a coalition of charitable trusts and investors and designed in consultation with CFS. It provides varied types of financial support for CLTs to access at different stages of their development, ranging from grants which CLTs could use to pay for technical assistance in project scoping and business planning, to an investment tranche that provided loans for development to supplement mainstream funding sources.

The CLT Fund's provision of grants for local groups to use for technical assistance highlights the importance of intermediary support of this nature. During the demonstration and empowerment programmes technical support had often been provided by CFS in partnership with a team of technical consultants, but this arrangement lacked longevity as they were time-limited programmes housed within an action research unit at a university. It therefore became apparent that some formal arrangement for the provision and funding of technical assistance may be required in order for CLT activity to flourish. One recommendation in the CFS response to the government consultation in 2008 was for the development of a network of intermediary support bodies that could support CLTs over a longer period of time:

In addition there needs to be a network of secondary agencies who can work directly with community activists providing mentoring/consultancy support. This can include bespoke

CLT Umbrella organisations, RSLs,¹ development trusts, secondary co-ops, rural community councils or others – who are available to support CLTs in development business plans and understanding the legal, financial and technical issues. (Community Finance Solutions, 2008: 21)

This recommendation introduces the concept of CLT umbrella organisations, which are sub-regional organisations that provide technical assistance to local CLT groups in addition to acting as intermediaries between local groups and external partners important to the development of CLTs. As the following section describes, the development of umbrellas has been central to the creation of a formalised CLT network that operates through a hierarchy of spatial scales in order to expand and replicate CLT activity. This is supported by the shared identity, common language and development of identifiable funding sources described above. The development of a formalised institutional framework for CLTs contrasts with the viral approach undertaken by the self-help-housing sector to date, which has been characterised by a loose horizontal network of support with peer-to-peer mentoring and partnerships formed at and dependent on local context.

4.2. The emergence of Umbrella CLTs

The establishment of intermediary bodies known as umbrella CLTs has been central to the development of a formalised CLT network operating at different spatial scales. Umbrella CLTs typically operate on a countywide basis (though in some instances they cover a wider geographical area) and tend to be staffed by a small team, sometimes a single individual, who have the remit of advising, supporting and promoting the work of local CLT groups that require assistance in their area.

There are currently seven umbrella CLTs in existence in England with the majority forming since the conclusion of the national demonstration and empowerment programmes. This is in part due to the identified need for a network of support, but also due to the experience of the umbrella CLT in Cornwall established in 2006. The Cornwall CLT was formed in conjunction with Cornwall Rural Housing Association, a small local provider looking to diversify its work and support local communities in meeting housing need where the housing association may be unable to do so. The Cornwall CLT was funded by a cocktail of finance and support from charitable investors such as the Tudor Trust as well as local councils throughout the county (Moore and Northcott, 2010). As shown in Table 2, the model of umbrellas forming in partnership with local housing associations has been replicated in other areas of the country. Local housing associations are selected as partners for their reputation as housing specialists and for their ability to contribute resources, capacity and promotional work for a new and (for some stakeholders) unconventional model of housing delivery.

¹ RSL (Registered Social Landlord) is the technical name for social landlords in England. They are also known as registered providers and housing associations.

Table 2: Umbrella CLTs currently operating in England and Wales

Umbrella CLT	Year Formed	Partner organisation (if applicable)	Type of service offered
Gloucestershire Land for People	2005	N/A	Asset developer/broker
Cornwall CLT	2006	Cornwall Rural Housing Association	Asset developer/broker
Cumbria CLT	2008	Cumbria Rural Housing Trust	Broker
Foundation East CLT (East Anglia)	2010	Foundation East CDFI ²	Asset developer/broker
Devon, Dorset and Somerset	2010	Hastoe Housing Association	Broker
Wiltshire	2011	Wiltshire Rural Housing Association	Broker
Lincolnshire	2012	N/A	Broker

There is, though, some diversity in the organisational structures and long-term objectives of umbrellas. While some umbrella bodies are created for specific periods of time in order to act as a catalyst to community-led housing solutions – such as a successful community housing facilitation project led by the Federation of Northumberland Development Trusts in the mid-2000s – others are set up with the purpose of having an ongoing impact through the development of their own housing. Here, umbrella CLTs become developers in their own right in local areas where there is no existing local CLT group. This approach has been particularly evident in Cornwall, where recent figures show that the Cornwall CLT has developed more homes than any other CLT in the country (Paterson and Dayson, 2011: 12), in addition to supporting numerous voluntary groups to develop local CLTs.

All umbrellas share the overriding purpose of fulfilling the intermediary functions described in Table 1. More specifically, as detailed below, they provide technical advice and guidance to communities developing CLTs, they assist in identifying and facilitating access to resources, and they play a promotional and advocacy role on behalf of CLTs in conversations with external partners (Moore, 2012).

Umbrella CLTs and the provision of technical assistance

Forming and developing a CLT is not simply a matter of commissioning the construction of new homes in areas of housing need, but involves the creation and management of an organisation that acquires resources, complies with public policy and conforms to regulatory measures. Access to this support is

² Foundation East CLT grew out of Foundation East, a Community Development Finance Institution. The activities of the organisation as a whole have a greater scope than CLTs, but it employs a dedicated CLT worker to act as a local intermediary.

especially important for CLT volunteers as skills and human resources to meet these requirements are often unevenly spread within and between communities, particularly as each CLT tends to be led by a small team of local enthusiasts and volunteers.

Advice relating to organisational creation and legal inception is particularly important for CLTs. Many CLTs are created as charities with designated charitable objectives to meet, which shape the activities of CLTs as there are limitations over organisational trading, handling of income and distribution of surpluses. Umbrella CLTs can advise on these processes and as to best practice, which is of importance at the beginning of forming a CLT as described by volunteers from local CLTs based in Cornwall:

‘The process of forming a CLT is daunting. It’d have been a much longer process [without the umbrella’s support] and we’d have been more likely to give up because of the time and we’re all volunteers. Not only do you not know exactly where to begin, but you don’t even have the sense of where to begin.’

‘We’d have probably found the support through the internet eventually but it’d have been a much longer process. The umbrella has enabled us to access grants and been there to suggest how it’s done elsewhere. I think we paid for a three day consultancy fee but they’re there if we need them, we’ve probably had ten times that support.’

Another beneficiary of umbrella CLT advice pointed towards the increased self-confidence of their organisation as a result of working alongside the umbrella CLT. Umbrellas tend to provide bespoke advice as opposed to formal training, but this beneficiary suggested that there had been a capacity-building benefit to the umbrella’s work:

‘We’ve reached a point where we’d have the confidence to carry on if the umbrella had to bail out for any reason. We’ve begun to take decisions ourselves and run ourselves as an organisation.’

This qualitative evidence suggests that umbrellas have an important role to play in creating an operational framework in which communities can be empowered to create and sustain their local organisations. This is not only important for CLTs that successfully develop housing. Elsewhere, the advice and guidance of an umbrella CLT highlighted risks according to organisational capacity, ongoing regulatory responsibilities (such as conformance to the requirements of public subsidy and charitable legal status), and long-term management of rental homes. This led to the brokerage of a partnership with a local housing association capable of supporting community ambitions, even if not through a conventional model of CLT ownership, as described by an umbrella CLT representative:

‘A feasibility study convinced the organisation that community-led development was not advisable given the mainstream development options and that really the organisation was on a hiding to nothing pursuing community ownership and stewardship.’

The provision of brokerage functions by umbrellas helps enable the development of local CLTs and create the conditions for their activity to progress. Advice is usually bespoke according to local needs and issues and is provided on a case-by-case basis that is sensitive to the needs and constraints of young CLTs that are unlikely to initially have assets or financial resources to pay for technical support:

Introductory advice and informal guidance is provided at no cost, as Foundation East is sensitive to the financial constraints of embryonic community organisations. As projects develop, consultancy fees are charged for more technical expertise and professional development services and these fees help to sustain the charitable work of Foundation East. Fees are agreed in advance on a case-by-case basis and grants may be available to cover them. (Foundation East, undated, accessed 25 January 2013)

The grants available to cover this support are provided by the national CLT Fund, which has proven to be of significant value to the development of the CLT sector. Local CLTs were able to access grant aid from the CLT Fund to fund the brokerage services provided by umbrella CLTs, even though umbrellas also provide free services and pro bono work where possible. Previous research has noted that the CLT Fund plays an important role linking umbrellas and local CLTs groups, as 'it provides a clear pool of revenue for local groups to access funding which they can then decide to use for purchase of the umbrella body's services' (Moore and Northcott, 2010: 7). Local CLTs are not always charged a membership or affiliation fee to umbrella CLTs as may be the case in other areas of the voluntary and community sector, so some form of income generation is crucial to ensuring the financial sustainability of umbrellas. It should also be noted that independent technical advisors affiliated to the CLT Fund can also offer their services to local CLT groups using the grants available, though umbrella CLTs are the most common form of intermediary service used by CLT groups in many locations.

Umbrella CLTs assistance with resource identification and acquisition

The presence of umbrella CLTs means that they are well placed to respond to windows of opportunity as they emerge, such as the availability of resources such as land. Paterson and Dayson (2011: 16) describe how the Foundation East umbrella CLT in East Anglia 'offers a service where they hold land within their institution on behalf of the community', a useful approach where land becomes available before community groups are fully formed as CLTs, for example during a process of community engagement, visioning and capacity-building. Land can then be transferred into community ownership as and when the local CLT is ready to assume responsibility. This asset developing and resource holding approach may be beneficial to local CLTs in the early stages of formation, reducing the possibility of missing key opportunities to acquire limited resources in their local area such as the sale of suitable land for housing development.

An additional function of umbrella CLTs has been the development of new financial models to enable CLT development. Given the declining pools of public subsidy available for housing development, all housing organisations are required to give thought to innovative funding models that might allow their activity to be replicated and expanded. The development of these financial models has been most obvious in Cornwall, where the umbrella CLT and its housing association partner attached professional credibility to the organisational form of a CLT when it was an emerging development model, and has since established local financial tools to assist CLTs. This includes a revolving development loan fund provided by Cornwall Council. Initially set at £1m with interest charged at the local authorities' pooled borrowing rate, this has recently been increased to £4m and offers a cheaper credit option for local CLTs while allowing the local authority a slight earning opportunity, creating a system of mutual benefit. This is available to local CLTs that are linked to the

umbrella CLT. The loan fund is replenished as schemes are completed, allowing money to be recycled and for other CLTs to benefit from its availability.

Umbrella CLTs role in advocating and promoting the CLT concept

Given the importance of scheme completion for the aforementioned loan fund, links to a professional umbrella CLT were welcomed by the local authority; for example one official described the umbrella's role 'sitting behind' voluntary-led local CLTs as being important for the facilitation of CLTs:

'That's [the umbrella] a carrier for smaller ones, it's a mechanism to facilitate things and nurture other groups, to step in if other groups fail or lose interest, and to keep things operating while they're forming.'

The umbrella CLT had promoted the concept of CLTs to local authorities in the county, building strong connections with those in the region and communicating the value of CLTs in complementing and supplementing existing forms of housing provision. Furthermore, previous research has argued that the presence of a countywide professionalised umbrella body can help safeguard the identity and reputation of local CLTs, as any group adopting the CLT model and therefore claiming community representation is likely to have had some involvement or raised some awareness with the umbrella CLT body (Moore and Northcott, 2010). This is not to suggest that local CLTs are committed to accepting support from sub-regional bodies, but to indicate that a collective presence offers an informal watermark of legitimacy to potential funding partners.

The umbrella CLT approach has been particularly effective in Cornwall, highlighted by the fact that 108 CLT homes have been provided by a number of different CLTs (including the umbrella itself) since the umbrella's inception, with a further 29 currently under construction. This amounts to nearly half the total number of CLT homes provided in England, demonstrating the impact of an umbrella support body that can provide technical support while acting as an intermediary between CLTs and their partners. Umbrella CLTs have become a key feature of a formalised institutional framework for CLTs, contrasting with the more informal and viral nature of the growth of self-help housing.

However, it is important to note that the presence of an umbrella CLT is not a standalone panacea for CLT development. Most of the umbrella CLTs have benefited from partnership with housing associations that have provided resources in kind, acted as host organisations and initiated joint developments and partnerships. Others have formed within existing community asset and finance organisations. This shows the importance of partnerships between local CLTs, new or young umbrella CLTs and existing third sector housing and community organisations. As the following section will demonstrate, collaboration between the CLT sector and housing associations may be increasingly important in their future development.

In addition, previous case study research found potential concern over the extent of umbrella CLT operations over large and disparate areas, where local volunteers feared that if an umbrella's activity became too thinly spread its impact could be lost, or local action could be emasculated (Paterson and Dunn, 2009). It is clear that the establishment of umbrella CLTs needs to be at a geographical scale that ensures they remain in contact with key strategic stakeholders in addition to maintaining close contact with local volunteers that lead CLTs and that should ultimately be the beneficiaries of their services. Further comparative research could assess the successes, enabling factors and barriers of

umbrella CLTs as the model spreads around the country. Finally, as noted in Cornwall, umbrella CLTs have in some cases become housing developers in their own right. This is a different approach to community ownership to that traditionally identified with CLTs and suggests that there may be continuing diversity in the management and governance of CLTs as the model is adopted by different communities and organisations. This could lead to similarities with the historical expansion of the housing association sector which often moved from local community roots to larger more dispersed organisations with increasingly centralised corporate governance, and diluted local accountability (Mullins, 2013).

4.3. National representation for CLTs

The institutional framework for CLTs was further strengthened in September 2010 with the creation of a National CLT Network. This was formed towards the conclusion of the demonstration and empowerment programmes led by CFS, with the National CLT Network assuming many of the intermediary functions CFS had performed for CLTs at a national level. Its inception was based on a recommendation of the national demonstration programme evaluation that identified a need for co-ordinated change to resolve common problems shared by individual CLTs geographically dispersed around the country:

There is still a need to mainstream certain aspects of support – in particular to create a nationally recognised body to represent CLTs, influence policy and lobby on their behalf. (Aird, 2009: 2)

The Network was formed to continue and expand the work of the demonstration and empowerment programmes by fulfilling these functions. It is hosted by, but constitutionally independent of, the National Housing Federation (NHF)³ which match funded a grant from the Department for Communities and Local Government. Ongoing funding is generated through annual membership subscriptions from local CLTs. It employs two members of staff and has a board of management that is democratically elected by and accountable to its membership, including representatives of local CLTs, umbrella CLTs and key stakeholders such as the NHF and CLT Fund.

As the designated national intermediary for CLTs, the National CLT Network represents its members at a national level by lobbying government, funders and regulators to create a favourable operational environment. Although the Network has only been in existence for a relatively short period of time, it has already successfully lobbied for more appropriate and proportionate investment models and regulatory processes for CLTs. In particular, it continued the work of the demonstration and empowerment programmes by securing a dedicated community-led housing programme of £25m as part of the HCA's affordable housing investment, paralleling the £30m EHCGP secured for self-help housing groups who do not have to be registered providers to receive grant. This reduces the registration requirements and regulatory measures placed on CLTs when public subsidy is received by encouraging partnership arrangements between housing associations and CLTs. It is therefore interesting that in both cases there has been recognition from government that there is benefit to be

³ The National Housing Federation is the national representative body for housing associations in England and actively supports and promotes the work of its members.

derived from allocating public funding to smaller community-based providers in this field. This seems somewhat at odds from other fields such as employment services and criminal justice where there is a current preference for contracting with large scale often private sector primes who have the resources to operate on a 'payment by results' basis with smaller third sector organisations located some way down the supply chain.

These partnerships used to access subsidy aim to combine the experience, expertise and capacity of housing associations in undertaking housing development with the local expertise, specialist knowledge and benefits of community ownership that CLTs offer for their local area. CLTs are able to bid for funding in their own right but are advised that, if they do not wish to become registered providers, they 'may find it beneficial to partner with existing consortia or investment partnerships to benefit from shared expertise in development' (Homes and Communities Agency, 2011: 30). This encouragement is also provided to housing associations:

Providers are particularly encouraged to include smaller, rural, specialist and community-based organisations in consortia arrangements, either at the outset or during the course of the contract so that proposals will better reflect local need. (Homes and Communities Agency, 2011: 29)

This reaffirms their growing role in supporting the CLT sector, as also evidenced by their partnerships with umbrella CLTs and the hosting service offered by the NHF to the National CLT Network.

The National CLT Network also seeks to address collective concerns and barriers that affect local groups. This includes the provision of standard documentation and targeted training for CLTs. It has also recently launched a peer-to-peer learning exchange programme for CLTs. This gives community groups the opportunity to visit successful CLTs across the country to learn from their experiences, share ideas and allow the factors that enable CLT development in one location to be replicated elsewhere (National CLT Network, 2012). This approach to replication, allowing communities to exchange experience, is facilitated by grants of up to £750 per group administered by the National Network that pay for the cost of travel, room hire and provide a fee for the hosts. This programme was launched in July 2012 and as such it is too early to assess its impact, but this type of approach mirrors the philosophy of the viral approach undertaken by the self-help housing sector. It also links to the observation of Pattison et al. (2011: 16) that self-help housing requires 'creative support from a variety of different sources.' By facilitating peer-to-peer exchange visits, the National CLT Network amplifies its impact, extends its geographical reach and allows community groups to learn and adapt ideas from established CLTs.

5. Discussion

Table 3 highlights the key functions performed by CLT intermediary organisations. It shows how a formalised network of support has emerged for local communities considering the formation of a CLT, existing CLTs, local authorities, and government and its agencies. This operates at different geographical scales according to both the function and its audience or beneficiary, and by doing so connects local communities wishing to develop and manage housing via a CLT with broader social, economic and political frameworks and agendas.

Table 3: Functions of sub-regional and national CLT intermediaries

Function	Audience/for the benefit of	Scale	Example	Facilitated by
Technical advice and guidance (financial, legal, organisational)	Local CLTs	Neighbourhood	Umbrella CLTs building community capacity	Umbrella CLTs/National Network
Dissemination of best practice and network building	Local CLTs	Neighbourhood	Peer-to-peer support programme	National CLT Network
Identification and facilitation of local resource opportunities (e.g. land)	Local CLTs	Local/ Sub-regional	Land holding	Umbrella CLTs
Advocacy and promotion of CLTs	Local authorities and partners	Local/ Sub-regional	Umbrellas building partnership with local authorities	Umbrella CLTs
Identification and brokerage of potential enabling partnerships	Similar organisations (e.g. HAS)	Local/ Sub-regional	CLT/housing association partnership	Umbrella CLTs/National CLT Network
Creating new financial tools	Local authorities	Local/ Sub-regional	Revolving loan funds	Umbrella CLTs
Lobbying for policy/national funding developments	National government and funding agencies	National	Improved access to HCA grant	National CLT Network
Provision of standard guidance and documentation/policy advice	Local CLTs	National	Online resources	National CLT Network

The growth of this institutional framework, with the National CLT Network and a number of sub-regional intermediaries forming from 2010 onwards, has paralleled both the rise in the number of CLTs in England and the interest of government in channelling its agendas of localism and community empowerment via community asset ownership structures such as CLTs. As Paterson and Dayson (2011) note, there are now more than 100 CLTs, and while the initial pioneers of the CLT approach were largely found in rural areas in the South West the model has begun to spread around the country. This is evidenced by the umbrella CLTs that have begun to form in the North and East of England where a critical mass of potential CLTs has been identified and an umbrella created to help facilitate local development.

In many ways the developments of the CLT and self-help housing sectors are similar. There have been achievements at national scale, by both CFS and the National CLT Network for CLTs, and by Self-Help-Housing.Org. They have each lobbied for dedicated streams of grant funding via the HCA,

led campaigns to influence the policy environment, facilitated peer-to-peer networks among local groups, and provided standard guidance and model documentation for communities to use.

Where the two sectors differ is in the recent move to formalised regionalised network structures in the CLT sector, where local CLTs have benefited from regional hubs of activity created by umbrellas. The presence of umbrellas has been seen to promote the concept of community-led housing as well as offering tangible benefits of resource identification and acquisition on behalf of communities, practical advice and support, and contributing to the development and dissemination of new financial models. Self-Help-Housing.Org has also stimulated functions that are performed at neighbourhood and regional levels and is continuing this work as part of the support provision for successful applicants to the EHCGP. However, while this work has begun to move to a regionalised network structure to support and promote local projects, the resources of Self-Help-Housing.Org as a national intermediary are limited and, as noted, currently focused on the successful applicants as opposed to new entrants to the field.

One option may be to create similar regional hubs for self-help housing organisations. This might involve the creation of dedicated independent facilitators along the lines of umbrella CLTs, acting as an extension of Self-Help-Housing.Org's role with a focus on a particular geographical area. It may include an extension of the promotional and peer support roles that better established and resourced self-help housing projects are already playing in local areas or it may be that local authority empty homes officers and housing associations will assume a greater role in the resourcing of self-help housing, as is seen in the CLT sector. Fundamentally, greater facilitation of self-help housing is likely to involve the identification of potential partners who possess distinct yet complementary roles.

If intermediaries similar to umbrella CLTs were to be created, they could undertake many of the neighbourhood and regional level functions required for self-help groups such as the negotiation of construction training contracts with colleges and other training providers. In addition to the dissemination of best practice, facilitation of network building and provision of expert advice, this could be a useful method of identifying and holding resources on behalf of communities while they undertake processes of visioning, community engagement and organisational planning. This may include housing associations, existing community organisations and empty homes officers in local authorities, who may also have an important role to play in the creation of new financial tools to support self-help. Where grants cover only part of the cost of bringing empty properties into use, community groups need to raise match funding and some are considering loans from banks and ethical investors and potentially from Big Society Capital. The government's EHCGP invited 'proposals to create or contribute to a revolving fund for the reinvestment of funding in delivering further properties as loans are repaid' (DCLG, 2012: 6). Further consideration of the potential for this could be given at local and regional levels, potentially in conjunction with the development of intermediaries, for example housing associations, to help deliver the objectives of such a fund. The example of the revolving fund for CLTs in Cornwall, where the majority of CLT development has so far occurred, shows how intermediary support established over a number of years coupled with the provision of financial tools within the local authority can be of benefit to local community-based self-help.

However, this would also require resourcing during a period of fiscal austerity, including funding cuts for many third sector delivery and infrastructure organisations (Kane and Allen, 2011). It might also, as in the CLT sector, lead to the introduction of a more professionalised layer and hierarchy of support, which may become less well connected to local communities and begin to resemble the larger housing associations that have long grown away from the niches that CLTs and self-help projects are now occupying. There may therefore be a parallel to be drawn with the CLT sector in that housing associations have played an increasingly important role in their development, either by helping to resource umbrella CLTs financially or by providing technical inputs into complex tasks such as HCA grant application. This role performed by the housing association sector is further emphasised by the National Housing Federation's contribution to the resourcing of the National CLT Network, which has played a key role in institutionalising CLTs at local, sub-regional and national levels.

While this intermediary support is clearly of importance, there may still be tensions in its provision. The research on CLTs has shown that local umbrella bodies can offer an informal watermark of legitimacy to potential funding partners while public grant for CLTs is most easily accessible when partnering with housing associations to help overcome practical problems. Yet, there will be instances where communities wish to pursue their own objectives and may feel that formalised partnership with professionalised bodies compromises principles of community-based self-help and people-centred regeneration. If resource acquisition for community-led housing bodies is dependent on alignment with professional frameworks, this may begin to question local independence and dilute community ethos.

Furthermore, the creation of formalised institutional networks built on common identities and a 'community of practice' makes assumptions as to the collective unity of individual organisations, when the acquisition of technical services and support may be a pragmatic short-term method of achieving particular aims as opposed to direct and continued affiliation with like-minded people and organisations. Similar issues will exist with viral approaches that aim to foster collaboration between local community organisations, where the genealogy of community-based self-help at local levels may influence the potential or otherwise for the amplification and expansion of similar activity.

6. Conclusion

There is currently a groundswell of support for CLTs and self-help housing solutions. Their specialised local focus and people-centred approach to housing procurement and the renovation of empty properties parallels the government's agenda of localism and community empowerment in the production and ownership of housing and regeneration. The analysis in this paper highlights the importance of intermediaries in facilitating and replicating forms of community-led housing, but more fundamentally it argues that in harnessing the scope for 'help from within' in communities, there needs to be an identification and participation of 'help from without' from allies to help construct the environment in which community self-help can thrive. To a degree, this has been achieved by CLTs, with an active network of CLTs, intermediaries, housing associations and local authorities involved in their development. Led by Self-Help-Housing.Org, the framework for communities bringing empty homes back into use has also begun to incorporate a range of roles, and local partners such as local authority empty property officers and housing associations. However, there are concerns that the

interests of local community-led groups may be incompatible with those of larger partners such as asset focused housing associations. Researchers were made aware of conflicts that had arisen in some cases between self-help housing organisations and housing associations, not just over inevitable property handbacks on expiry of leases, but also where rents were increased substantially by housing associations prior to handback thereby creating sustainability problems for self-help groups. A key challenge in scaling up community-led initiatives is the danger of professionalisation and distancing decision making away from communities. This danger was recognised in the self-help housing consultation in December 2010 (Pattison et al., 2011) when the solution of 'going viral' was posed as an alternative to conventional increases in scale of individual organisations. Such experiences tended to support a view, also found to some extent in the CLT research, that there are differences of institutional logic between community-led and large scale housing providers, and that caution is therefore required in developing such partnerships if the values of small scale local providers are to be preserved.

Thus, our research shows that while intermediary support is clearly important, there are always likely to be tensions in its provision. The preference for 'viral solutions' which preserve the benefits of local community leadership pose particular challenges for facilitation methods. On the one hand a loose network approach of the type developed by Self-Help-Housing.Org with peer mentoring by existing projects can help to maintain the advantages of small scale, but might easily overburden local projects and divert them from their internal objectives. On the other hand umbrella organisations such as those that have emerged in the CLT sector can reduce such burdens and provide technical expertise but may pose challenges to local control, particularly where they take on an additional property development role in their own right. A third approach of forming partnerships with technical experts such as housing associations, more apparent in the CLT sector, also carries the potential risk of moving decision making away from local communities and overcoming different institutional logics. It will be interesting to observe as the two sectors evolve, the extent to which similar or different solutions emerge to the common dilemmas of harnessing external resources, while maintaining the local scale and accountability that provides the unique added value of the community-based housing sector.

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The third sector provides support and services to millions of people. Whether providing front-line services, making policy or campaigning for change, good quality research is vital for organisations to achieve the best possible impact. The Third Sector Research Centre exists to develop the evidence base on, for and with the third sector in the UK. Working closely with practitioners, policy-makers and other academics, TSRC is undertaking and reviewing research, and making this research widely available. The Centre works in collaboration with the third sector, ensuring its research reflects the realities of those working within it, and helping to build the sector's capacity to use and conduct research.

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