Understanding Housing Aspirations: Expectation and choice

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Introduction

• Changing aspirations?
• About the review
• Towards a new understanding of aspirations
• Emerging research and practice
• A new research agenda
• Challenges for housing providers
Changing aspirations?

• Housing aspirations are a key element and dimension within housing systems

• Aspirations are formed by, and inform, housing policy, socially, politically, financially and culturally

• Ownership - The American/Australian/British ‘dream’?

• But declining rates of home ownership, increasing unaffordability in the private rented sector and growing waiting lists for social housing

• How do people negotiate housing systems when what they hope for may be increasingly out of reach? Is this changing housing aspirations?
The review

- Undertaken by the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CaCHE)
- Review of 61 articles published since 1990 and relating to Australian, Western European and United States contexts
- Data was drawn from a wider mapping review of evidence on housing aspirations, expectations and choices, which utilised a comprehensive search methodology to identify 340 relevant research outputs through systematic assessment
- Stakeholder roundtable
Aspirations research – conceptual and practical challenges

• Lack of conceptual clarity, with ‘aspirations’ used interchangeably with ‘need’; preferences’; ‘expectations’ and ‘choices’

• Lack of theoretical/conceptual investigation of how aspirations are constructed, embodied, articulated and actioned at both individual and societal level

• Emerging, but limited, empirical research to date on how aspirations may be changing- what are the implications of these changes?
How do we understand housing aspirations?

• Desires to achieve housing-related ambitions in the future, including optimistic assessments of what can be realised

• Different to expectations (the likely housing outcomes people anticipate, regardless of desirability), preferences (housing ‘wants’) and needs (a baseline of adequate accommodation)

• Crucially, we need to think more broadly about aspirations – first step to meeting people’s hopes for their housing futures

• Move beyond tenure!
Emerging research – what are the changes?

- Housing affordability and homeownership declining, tightening mortgage credit, importance of familial assistance, limited access to social rented housing, increasing role of PRS, new forms of shared living
- Importance of labour market, educational indebtedness, and wider welfare regimes
- But – limited literature on how changing objective conditions are reconfiguring aspirations and expectations
- Housing expectations more fluid than aspirations (McKee et al., 2017; Aramburu, 2015; Bruce and Kelly, 2013; Colic-Peisker and Johnson, 2012; Hoolachan et al. 2017)
- Continued aspirations for homeownership
The conceptual issue – dimensions of housing aspirations

• Inter-relationship between socialised, subjective preferences, and the wider structural factors (political economy) that impact on the extent to which people can realise these → aspirations

• **Political economic dimensions**
  • E.g. relationship between capital and labour – increasing precarity for young people, hollowing out of mid-range work

• **Societal dimensions**
  • Strong social norms for homeownership in UK (and elsewhere)
  • State shapes these norms, e.g. Right to Buy, mortgage guarantee schemes
  • Homeownership is the benchmark against which other forms of housing are judged – distinguishes ‘responsible’ citizenship
The conceptual issue – dimensions of housing aspirations

• **Individual dimensions**
  • Rational view (e.g. housing as an asset)
  • Socialisation into ‘naturalness of homeownership’ (Colic-Peisker and Johnson, 2010) – ‘engrained in the Australian culture and psyche’ (Bruce and Kelly, 2017)
  • What happens when ‘naturalised’ aspirations for housing are increasingly unachievable?

• **Spatio-temporal dimensions**
  • Aspirations linked to time and place, e.g. differs across life course and between welfare contexts – impacts on the attractiveness of different housing forms in different times and places (Ronald, 2008)
Emerging practice

Commutal living is growing popular with freelancers and business owners happy to network round the dinner table.

Accessing expertise

'Come with an open mind': the people who live at work

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99% of councils feel LHA cap restricts young people’s access to housing

Councillors feel their efforts to help young homeless people are being hampered by welfare reforms, research has found.

Supported Lodgings
Exploring the feasibility of long-term community hosting as a response to youth homelessness in Scotland

Beth Watts and Janice Blenkinsopp
August 2018

Recognising the social responsibilities of the Private Rented Sector within local welfare systems

The Private Rented Sector (PRS) is an established and rapidly growing solution to homelessness and local housing need. However, the social responsibilities and challenges faced by private landlords and letting agents demand greater attention.

When considering local housing duties and the obligations of social landlords to meet the needs of tenants, the line between housing and social care has always been blurred. Those divisions of responsibility have become increasingly opaque over the last decade, as people with some of the most complex social support needs have transferred from social and supported housing to the PRS.

A shrinking and increasingly risk-averse social housing sector is not only unable to meet demand but excludes individuals on the basis of rent arrears, anti-social behaviour and criminal convictions, as Crisis have recently demonstrated. The removal of the ringfence around Supporting People funding and a reported 37% reduction in core council funding between 2010 and 2016 also shows how programmes of austerity have undermined the capacity of the social and supported housing sector through decommission and decline.
Towards a research agenda

- Conceptualisation and understanding aspirations linked specifically to housing
- Link between housing, labour market and other dimensions
- Broader international evidence required
- Temporality of housing aspirations over the longer-term
- Understanding aspirations beyond simply ‘tenure’
- Consultation with housing association tenants, October 2018
Challenges for housing providers

- Maintaining services for people and communities most in need, whilst diversifying to meet wider housing need and markets
- Whose needs are not accounted for? Moving beyond traditional services and models.
- Reconsidering provider-tenant relationships
- Reconsidering the meaning of tenure
- Challenging perceptions of social housing in the popular imagination


