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PRESS RELEASE

SOCIAL HOUSING DESIGNS NEED TENANTS' PARTICIPATION

The problems associated with social – largely council – housing in regards to choice of location, build and design are the direct result of tenants not being consulted or participating in the decision making process – in a new History & Policy paper on social housing and tenant participation, written by Peter Shapely of Bangor University.

The problems of social housing, claims Shapely – giving close scrutiny to the period between 1920 and 1970 - has much to do with lack of tenant consultation and participation. This resulted, especially from the late 1960s, in an increase in tenants' dissatisfaction, country-wide protests, and an erosion of trust between tenants and social housing landlords – in particular, local authorities.

Governments' approach then to social housing, he argues, had been long influenced by professional and political ideologies, civic pride, financial restrictions and geographical barriers – the hallmarks of policies dominated by a 'top-down' approach which had planners, architects, builders and government officials approving a range of solutions to social housing. The solutions included out-of-town estates, new towns, overspill estates, system-built designs and improvement schemes meant as palliatives but instead led to the rapidly decreasing social fabric of such housing provisions.

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Given the history of social housing and social policy, Shapely rationalised that 'there is no short-cut around the need for patient, genuinely local consultation and participation where housing is concerned'.

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NOTE-TO-THE-EDITOR

Peter Shapely's paper 'Social housing and tenant participation' is available at:

www.historyandpolicy.org

'The housing crisis' by Peter Shapely will be published in the April edition of BBC History magazine at: www.bbchistorymagazine.com

Notes to editor

1. Peter Shapely is a lecturer in modern and contemporary history at Bangor University, Wales.
2. *History & Policy* is an independent initiative working for better public policy through an understanding of history, see www.historyandpolicy.org for further details. *History & Policy* is funded with a charitable grant from the Philanthropic Collaborative.
The initiative was founded by historians in Cambridge and London and is based in the Centre for Contemporary British History, at the Institute of Historical Research, University of London.

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