

Architecture, Participation and Society

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Ch 2 A brief historical review of Community Technical Aid and Community Architecture

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INTRODUCTION

As noted in the introduction to the book, part of the interest of the investigators to research the scope of wider social participation in the architectural process is their previous involvement in what has been loosely termed 'Community Technical Aid' and 'Community Architecture'. In the United Kingdom this largely developed in the 1970s but became eclipsed by the middle 1980s, surviving for longer in the USA (the experience of some in more international activities as described in chapter 3). The history of the UK movement has been written up in a number of key texts (Blundell Jones et al 2005; O'Sullivan, 1988; Towers, 1995; Wates & Knevitt, 1987), but the literature dries up in the latter part of the 1980s. Thus, as an entry point for the research the study reviewed previous experience with the intention to identify what happened to these movements. The objective of this chapter is to examine the origins, activities and experience of some of the community technical aid and architecture movement actors in the UK and from this review draw issues of relevance for the contemporary context.¹

ORIGINS OF COMMUNITY TECHNICAL AID AND ARCHITECTURE

Longer term antecedents to wider social participation in architecture can be identified in concepts of 'indigenous' knowledge, 'Rapid Urban Appraisal' and sociological investigation of 'slum' communities (refs), as well as the concept of the 'everyday' as applied to architecture, contemporarily interpreted though, for instance, Venturi & Scott Brown's work.² However, more explicitly, in the early 1960s some practising architect/planners began to write specifically about the role of community in the built environment development process. One of the most influential in the UK was John Turner, a British architect working in Peru in squatter settlements. Turner's articles in *Architectural Design* (Turner 1963, 1968) fitted in with radical intellectual themes of the mid

¹ While attempting to provide a wide overview, inevitably this is constrained by available sources – literature and contacts – and as such it is stressed that this is not an attempt at a comprehensive history, but argues that its partial nature does not detract from its conclusions concerning key issues for later deeper investigation – see case studies.

² Venturi and Scott Brown are less known for their advocacy planning work, which more directly engaged with communities and participation.

to late 1960s. Another writer and practitioner, more influential in continental Europe, was Dutch architect John Habraken, whose flexible design approach to housing, *Supports*, was first published in 1961 (first published in English in 1972). While these two approaches were from very different geographical and economic worlds, and their approaches derived from different perspectives (Turner emphasising the role of households vis-à-vis the state and Habraken criticising the role of the state vis-à-vis households), there was a lot of convergence in their ideas.

Turner went on to develop his ideas through a considerable number of publications, including a celebrated debate with neo-Marxist structuralist Rod Burgess on the nature of self-help housing in the so-called 'developing world' (ref). While he was influenced by a number of Latin American and socioological/anthropological sources which were not clearly acknowledged, Turner developed a coherent and influential approach which moved from the role of the state vis-à-vis the household in so-called 'self-help' housing to the role of the community and the "Third Sector" (ref). A generation of architects/planners active in what was generally termed as the 'developing world' based its professional activity on this approach, and one of the most powerful international aid agencies (the World Bank) went on to adopt key elements of this between 1970 and 1985, with varying degrees of success (Jenkins, Smith & Wang 2006). One UK architect who developed a system for self-build was Walter Segal in the 1970's. This was based on timber-frame prefabricated panelling and was used in a project supported by Lewisham Borough Council in London from 1981. Segal's technique was adapted by Rod Hackney (see below) for a self-build housing association in Stirling in the late 1980's. Habraken developed his initial ideas in the mid 1960's in a number of projects developed at the Technical University of Eindhoven which demonstrated his approach to family controlled house construction in practice. This was subsequently developed in Adelaide Road, Camden, London by Nabel Hamdi and Nicholas Wilkinson in the mid 1970's in a public housing project for the Greater London Council (Primary Support Structures and Housing Assembly Kits PSSHAK).

While intellectually influential, the practical application of the "supports approach" was never really taken up by the major investors in housing in Europe, whether state, private or voluntary sector. However, it later influenced international housing approaches after the "self-help" era as an element of the United Nations supported "enabling strategies" approach. Hamdi also moved into academia and continued to practice in the field of 'development' and publish within the 'self-help' tradition (e.g. Hamdi 2004). In addition, in the late 1990's there was a resurgence of a growing interest in self-build in the global North (especially UK as this continued strong in US), partly due to economic, but also ecological pressures,, with various examples of "green housing".

Other, less well known, pioneers of participatory architecture in Europe in this period were Belgian architect Lucien Kroll who incorporated Habraken's ideas in public buildings such as the Louvain Medical School extension (begun 1969) ; Anglo-Swedish architect-planner Ralph Erskine's late 1960's development of the "Byker" public housing estate in Newcastle, with intensive

community participation ; and British writer Colin Ward, whose most influential book “Housing - an Anarchist approach” (1976) mainly dealt with participation of tenants in public housing management.

A different strand of community engagement in the built environment came from the United States and was more allied to the wider social protest movements of the mid to late 1960's. This strand was the advocacy planning approach where professionals represented poor communities in resistance to comprehensive redevelopment (Davidoff, 1965). In the 1970's this approach was often based on Community Design Centres providing local-level technical assistance within communities on a number of issues, architecture as well as planning, fore-runners of such centres in the UK. To a great extent these came to depend on government funds, which initially flowed from federal agencies such as the Housing and Urban Development agency (HUD). One of the lasting conceptual impacts of these activities was the 1969 analysis of community participation by Sherry Arnstein, the Chief Advisor on Citizen Participation to HUD, whose 'ladder of participation' is still constantly used as a reference for community participation, despite critiques.³

The urban unrest in the US was paralleled with increasing public disaffection in the UK from the mid 1960's of the Central and Local Government policy towards increasingly large-scale post-war urban slum clearance and renewal programmes, and the wholesale replacement of older properties in poor condition with what were seen as featureless system-built multi-storey flats. Local Authority Architecture and Planning Departments were largely viewed as monolithic and unresponsive to the social upheaval, dispersal and break down of traditional communities attributed to their redevelopment plans. In the light of this, UK groups developed community engagement activities including the organisation Support (1976) in London, which co-ordinated planning assistance to communities such as those resisting redevelopment in Covent Garden, as well as supporting the squatter movement – where squatters inhabited unused buildings in areas blighted for redevelopment as well as upmarket housing and office areas (Anning, N. et al 1980). Squatting had existed after each of the World Wars but became fairly widespread in the UK and continental Europe again in the late 1960's and through the 1970's, particularly in Holland, but also in Denmark where the “Free city of Copenhagen” (Kristiania) was created, still existing today in a much modified form. In some cases squatters led to the creation of formal housing associations, such as in Bristol (Ospina 1987).

These early community architecture and planning movements to a great extent initially depended on students and radical architects and planners working with communities on a voluntary basis, however with growing realisation that the social movements these organisations serviced were significant, government agencies began to support these activities. They also began to include participation as an element in policy, with (in the UK) the publication of the Skeffington Report on Public Participation (“People and Planning”) in 1969. This led to a growth of local pressure groups which were

³ See Chapter 3 on International Experience for more on the US.

to be included in the statutory planning process. The Housing Act of 1969 also introduced General Improvement Areas and later (1974 Act) Housing Action Areas and Priority Neighbourhoods, signalling a reversal of the comprehensive redevelopment approach to one of rehabilitation. In addition the formation of the Planning Aid Scheme in 1973 by the (then) Town and Country Planning Association consolidated the US advocacy planning approach in the UK.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY ARCHITECTURE AND HOW DOES IT DIFFER FROM COMMUNITY TECHNICAL AID?

The term community architecture can be traced back to the early 1970's when the then President of the RIBA, Fred Pooley, used it to refer to the provision of architecture for the community by local authorities (Wates & Knevitt, 1987). This definition was contested (e.g. Wates & Knevitt 1987:32) and in fact was greatly expanded over the next two decades to refer to the provision of a wide number of related built environment professional services, which included not only architecture but also planning, landscape, surveying and even graphic design, to enable local groups to actively participate in the (re)development of their environment (Towers, 1995). Wates & Knevitt (1987:119) argued that as “the built environment is too complex and inter-dependent to be fragmented...it has to be treated as a whole system.” To this end they place a greater emphasis on “the process of development than ... the end product”, noting that the most appropriate solution to a local group's problems may not even necessitate an architectural input.

This greater focus on process rather than end product, however, not only blurs the boundaries between community architecture, broader community technical aid and wider forms of community development, rendering it more difficult to identify and trace historically, but it also encapsulates the fundamental tension between process and product inherent within community-oriented architecture/technical aid. This tension is captured in Table 1.1, where Wates & Knevitt contrasted a process-led community architecture with an end-product led conventional architecture in an attempt to offer a polarised overview showing the clear advantages of the former and the clear disadvantages of the latter. Till (2005:25) argues that such an approach, however, leads to a “simplistic dialectic: inclusive/exclusive, democratic/authoritarian, bottom up/top down”, which leaves “the original terms unscathed and the new terms unanalysed.”

Table 1.1 What makes community architecture different

	<i>Conventional architecture</i>	<i>Community architecture</i>
Status of user	Users are passive recipients of an environment conceived, executed, managed and evaluated by others: corporate, public or private sector landowners and developers with professional 'experts'.	Users are – or are treated as – the clients. They are offered (or take) control of commissioning, designing, developing, managing and evaluating their environment, and may sometimes be physically involved in

		construction.
User/expert relationship	Remote, arm's length. Little if any direct contact. Experts – commissioned by landowners and developers – occasionally make superficial attempts to define and consult end-users, but their attitudes are mostly paternalistic and patronizing.	Creative alliance and working partnership. Experts are commissioned by, and are accountable to, users, or behave as if they are.
Expert's role	Provider, neutral bureaucrat, elitist, 'one of them', manipulator of people to fit the system, a professional in the institutional sense. Remote and inaccessible.	Enabler, facilitator and 'social entrepreneur', educator, 'one of us', manipulator of the system to fit the people and challenger of the status quo: a professional as a competent and efficient adviser. Locally based and accessible.
Scale of project	Generally large and often cumbersome. Determined by pattern of land ownership and the need for efficient mass production and simple management.	Generally small, responsive and determined by the nature of the project, the local building industry and the participants. Large sites generally broken down into manageable packages.
Location of project	Fashionable and wealthy existing residential, commercial and industrial areas preferred. Otherwise a green-field site with infrastructure (roads, power, water supply and drainage, etc.): i.e. no constraints	Anywhere, but most likely to be urban, or periphery of urban areas; area of single or multiple deprivation; derelict or decaying environment.
Use of project	Likely to be a single function or two or three complimentary activities (e.g. commercial, housing or industrial).	Likely to be multi-functional.
Design style	Self-conscious about style; most likely 'international' or 'modern movement'. Increasingly one of the other fashionable and identifiable styles: Post-Modern, Hi-tech, Neo-Vernacular or Classical Revival. Restrained and sometimes frigid; utilitarian.	Unselfconscious about style. Any 'style' may be adopted as appropriate. Most likely to be 'contextual', 'regional' (place-specific) with concern for identity. Loose and sometimes exuberant; often highly decorative, using local artists.
Technology/resources	Tendency towards: mass production, prefabrication, repetition, global supply of materials, machine-friendly technology, 'clean sweep' and new build, machine intensive, capital intensive	Tendency towards: small-scale production, on-site construction, individuality, local supply of materials, user-friendly (convivial) technology, re-use, recycling and conservation, labour and time intensive.
End product	Static, slowly deteriorates, hard to manage and	Flexible, slowly improving, easy to manage and

	maintain, high-energy consumption.	maintain, low-energy consumption.
Primary motivation	Private sector: return on investment (usually short-term) and narrow self-interest. Public Sector: social welfare and party political opportunism. Experts: esteem from professional peers. Response to general national or regional gap in market, or social needs and opportunities.	Improvement of quality of life for individuals and communities. Better use of local resources. Social investment. Response to specific localized needs and opportunities.
Method of operation	Top-down, emphasis on product rather than process, bureaucratic, centralized with specialisms, compartmentalized, stop-go, impersonal, anonymous, paper management, avoid setting a precedent, secretive.	Bottom-up, emphasis on process rather than product, flexible, localized, holistic and multidisciplinary, evolutionary, continuous, personal, familiar, people management, setting precedents, open.
Ideology	Totalitarian, technocratic & doctrinaire (Left or Right); big is beautiful, competition, survival of the fittest.	Pragmatic, humanitarian, responsive and flexible, small is beautiful, collaboration, mutual aid.

Source: Wates & Knevitt 1987:24-25)- reproduced with permission

The Wates & Knevitt definition of community architecture does not allow for any difficulties which may arise from emphasising process over end product. As such, the problems outlined by Comerio (1987) below, would fail to be identified and addressed. Comerio (1987:16), when outlining the development of Community Design Centres in North America in the 1970's, pointed out that some of the problems arising from an undue emphasis on process meant, "unfortunately a large percentage of the designs and plans produced in the 1960's and 1970's were never implemented" as "most Community Design Centres were staffed by young inexperienced professionals whose ideology was stronger than their technical skills. Their rebellion against the system was as much a rebellion against the sterility of modern planning and design, and they looked to participatory techniques to give them a new way to approach design. As such they focused more on process than product."

An essential difference, however, between pioneering community architects in Europe and advocacy planners in the USA was the tendency for the former to look on participation as a means to produce good design, whereas the latter were interested in community empowerment itself. Thus, while community architecture and planning began to become more acceptable and main stream, it also represented very different political and professional approaches. Comerio (1987:26) emphasized the need for community architecture also to pay heed to the end product and cautioned that design is just as fundamental as the politics of participation. "We should recognise that the social motivation behind community design does not, and should not, preclude good design." Yet, how can this inherent tension be reconciled - for

as Till (2005:25) observes “participation presents a fundamental threat to normative architectural values”, that rest on a belief that the architect as technical and aesthetic expert must have full control of the drawing board.

Community Architecture was really only a movement in the sense it promoted a range of activities within the profession which incorporated some form of wider social participation in developing the built environment. As such, arguably Community Technical Aid (CTA) encompassed Community Architecture, as is highlighted below. A key issue concerning the emergence of these movements and their consolidation (and eventual demise) was the changing policy context that led to growing professionalisation of community oriented activities, both of the activists and other professionals, as well as the growth of more general engagement with individuals and community groups through Citizens Advice Bureaux from the 1970s.

COMMUNITY ARCHITECTURE AND COMMUNITY TECHNICAL AID IN THE 1970s AND 1980s

Community Architecture

Ralph Erskine’s success at Byker paved the way for Rod Hackney, who was to become the community architecture movement’s leader and one of its most celebrated champions. Hackney started out in 1972 in Black Road, Macclesfield, Cheshire, as an architectural student who lived in a two up - two down terrace which lacked an inside toilet. On applying to the local authority for a grant to renovate the property, he found that the area was designated for clearance in 5 years. He founded the Black Road Action Group and led a successful campaign on the grounds that the housing was sound and suitable for rehabilitation, a cheaper and more sustainable option than large scale redevelopment. Under the 1969 Housing Act, Hackney was able to claim the area was eligible for a General Improvement Grant, and thus qualified for upgrading rather than clearance. Hackney became the lead architect for the project and engaged the tenants in the construction process, which was the first General Improvement Area to be proposed, developed and managed by the residents themselves.

Throughout the 1970’s the practice of community architecture remained a relatively fringe activity, but by the early 1980s it had proliferated to the point where the Prince of Wales used the occasion of an RIBA gala dinner to on the one hand condemn the practices of conventional architects for their apparent lack of regard for the needs of people, whilst, on the other hand, praising community architects, especially Rod Hackney (Sim, 1995). The movement further consolidated its influence on the profession when in 1987 Rod Hackney became president of the RIBA.

Another influence on the profession which led to this incorporation of the movement was the Architect’s Revolutionary Council (ARC), set up by architect Brian Anson who had worked on the Covent Garden project. This

was predominantly a pressure group targeting the RIBA, seen as a bastion of corporate interests that did not adequately reflect those held by a growing number of architects. By 1975 the group had a growing membership of 100 plus architects and had expanded into 'The New Architectural Movement' (NAM), which circulated a newsletter emphasising the merits of understanding user need. The RIBA responded in 1976 by setting up the Community Architecture Working Group answerable to a newly created Community & Working Affairs Committee and led by Hackney from 1977. This was later led by architect Ian Finlay who instigated the development of a National Community Partnership of approximately 20 voluntary organisations with the aim of securing funding more effectively. Both groups led to an increased focus on the need for architects to develop closer ties with the community, and by 1982 the RIBA set up the Architectural Aid Fund to offer resources to community groups to pay fees for professional services. This was financed from the Department of the Environment's Special Grants Programme, to fund feasibility studies for community projects.

The process of institutionalising community architecture was continued through the first international conference on community architecture ("Building Communities") and the creation of the National Community Aid Fund and the Prince's Inner City Trust. Increasingly the approach was predominantly used by government as a component within its inner city renewal policy – partly as its housing policies cut back drastically on aid to housing associations. The peak of the community architecture movement was celebrated in 1987 by the book 'Community Architecture: how people are creating their own environment' (Wates & Knevitt 1987).

Community Technical Aid

By the early 1980's the concept of providing technical aid direct to the public – similar to the US Community Design Centres - was developed in the UK through Community Technical Aid Centres (CTACs). These benefited from a favourable political climate, as the Conservative Government was supportive of the voluntary sector, preferring local initiative to local authorities. However CTACs were generally funded either through Local Authorities or the government's urban programme which permitted them to support organisations at the early stage of a project and allow them to apply for funding with a professionally prepared feasibility study. An Association of Community Technical Aid Centres (ACTAC) was set up in 1983 to provide a forum and provide resources and advice to CTACs. Whilst the Association began with only 15 member organisations, within two years this number had grown to over 50.

The experience in England

The first Community Technical Aid Centre had been developed in London by an American, Ed Berman, who had been involved in the Community Design Centres Movement in North America. Although this did not include architecture until 1975, it comprised a co-operative of community workers,

teachers and artists with the aim of enhancing environmental awareness, and supporting groups to set up related educational and/or arts projects. By the mid 1970's this CTAC was housed in a purpose built office in Camden, and founded Neighbourhood Use of Building & Space (NUBS), which developed to fulfil a community need for a free architectural service (Towers, 1995). By 1979 NUBS had worked on 3 projects, including one which aimed to preserve and convert the Victorian public baths in North Kensington, which had attracted support from the Ancient Monuments Society, albeit not implemented. The original aim of NUBS to provide a free service seems to have been curtailed by the architect's Code of Professional Conduct which prevented them from doing so however, it did succeed in harnessing public support for preserving buildings deemed of architectural heritage via change of use (Towers, 1995)..

In 1976 Tom Woolley and a group of students at the Architectural Association in London set up Support Community Building Design which aimed to provide an architectural service along the same lines as NUBS. Support was a co-operative based on the premise it would only assist groups who undertook their own building work and it worked within the boundaries of the Professional Code of Conduct. That is, it offered services for a minimum fee to voluntary groups who had managed to secure funding.

In Liverpool the Council sought the help of housing advocacy organisation Shelter to promote ways of rehabilitating the Granby area of Toxteth in 1969, leading to Shelter's Neighbourhood Action Project (SNAP). SNAP set up a neighbourhood office with planners, architects and social workers who provided a wide range of technical advice. Amongst its recommendations when it completed its short period of work was that the redevelopment of areas like Granby needs to be undertaken by an agency with powers akin to a new town development corporation to cut through the complex bureaucracy, and also have the funds to meet the high costs involved. Another of the products of this pilot project was the creation of a housing co-operative, which eventually, together with other co-ops, created a new specialised service organisation – Neighbourhood Housing Services (NHS) - to provide professional advice to new housing co-operative ventures. NHS pioneered 2 key approaches: first that of architects working with local residents in a community; and second the promotion of the co-op concept. It was very successful and by 1997 it supported 8 co-ops with over 20 staff. This eventually led to the creation of the first new build housing co-operative in the UK – the Weller Street Coop.

In the late 1970's and early 1980's such positive experiences with tenant co-operatives within state stock led to their replication and various local authorities supported these, including Glasgow, where the best known coop is the Calvay Housing Co-operative (see below). By 1981, the Labour Party, via the Greater London Council, supported and funded the development of a number of community-led co-ops in London, including the Matrix Feminist Architectural co-op. This offered a design service aimed at women's needs.

In Manchester in 1979 the Town & Country Planning Association, as a 'Planning Aid' service, set up a Community Technical Aid Centre, which initially focused on planning before evolving into a design co-operative. This recently was subsumed into Trafford Council. In 1979, just a few months after the first CTAC was set up in Manchester, the first such user-managed organisation was set up in Liverpool, the 'Community Technical Services Agency' (COMTECHSA) Limited (registered as an Industrial and Provident Society). This was funded through Liverpool City Council's Inner City Partnership Programme. Now, it operates as a Society for the Benefit of the Community, with a membership comprising largely community and residents groups. The membership has grown to over 600 community and voluntary groups⁴.

The RIBA Community Architecture Group offered support and funding to set up an 'urban workshop' in Newcastle-on-Tyne, which ran an environmental education service and advice centre in the city centre. This was staffed by 3 architects and Newcastle University architecture students, and later evolved into 'the Newcastle Architecture Workshop', a CTAC. However, by 1999 the CTAC workshop resource closed due to lack of funding, and has now been replaced by Northern Architecture, an Architecture Centre funded CABE and the Arts Council of England. Although not part of the English experience, a Community Technical Aid Centre was also set up as a voluntary organisation in Belfast in 1984 by community groups to assist develop projects benefiting disadvantaged communities. It has been partially funded by the Department of Environment, this funding being used to provide free services to community groups deemed most in need.⁵

The experience in Scotland

In Glasgow, Raymond Young, a student in the Department of Architecture at Strathclyde University, wrote his thesis on the topic of Public Participation in housing rehabilitation. The Tenement Improvement Project (TIP) was an outcome of the thesis, which demonstrated the economic and social viability of in-situ tenement housing rehabilitation, and was grant funded for 3 years and led to the development of a Housing Research Unit in the Strathclyde University Department of Architecture & Building Science. Jim Johnson and Raymond Young were joint founders of the TIP, which developed along similar lines to the Architecture Department based Community Design Centres (CDCs) in the US and ran for 3 years.

On this basis, ASSIST was set up in 1972 by a group of architects and students from the Department of Architecture at the University of Strathclyde, with the aim of offering a free technical aid service for the rehabilitation of tenements. To this end, they set up an office in an old bicycle shop in

⁴ Members each have a £1 share in the organisation and elect a voluntary committee of management from their representatives to run the organisation on their behalf. For more information, please see COMTECHSA case study.

⁵ Where groups are able to pay fees these are used to offset costs for those unable to pay - the principle of all CTACs.

Taransey Street, Govan, which led to the development in 1973 of the 'Crombie' Central Govan Housing Association. ASSIST directly supported the creation of community-based housing associations as project managers clients and worked through locally-based "architectural shops". The project developed both innovative technical solutions and its professional services went considerably beyond the traditional architectural professional remit to include accessing government finance, negotiating with lawyers and assisting with the initial managerial institution building. ASSIST was funded by Glasgow City Council through fees for improvement grants. The Govan Housing Association moved to Dennistoun in 1976, and ASSIST then opened another office in Govanhill.⁶

The demand for technical advice by a well established urban network of tenant and community groups in Glasgow led to the formation of the Technical Services Agency in 1983, a community controlled Technical Aid Centre. Originally funded by the Gulbenkian Foundation and Glasgow City Council, and latterly Urban Aid, TSA offered free advice to over 200 member groups and organisations, and was able to undertake projects that were not viable commercially, completing several refurbishment and new-build projects.⁷ Aware that criticism of housing and repairs policy was leading to antipathy from the City Council, TSA was instrumental in setting up Community Architecture Scotland (CAS) Ltd. which aimed to generate funding as a trading subsidiary. CAS lasted until 1990, when the departure of a number of key individuals, along with the changing in housing funding through the establishment of direct government housing agency Scottish Homes, which changed the landscape of tenant organisations.

In the 1980's, dissatisfactions with council approaches, and limitations on budgets and strategies resulted in many of Glasgow District Council projects being unsuccessful. As a result the Council became more directly active in encouraging Housing Associations as a vehicle for local tenants and users to become involved in the processes of design, management and maintenance. As well as refurbishing older tenement properties, associations were also set up to address the considerable problems in the social housing of the post-war peripheral estates. Early examples of such associations were Calvay Co-operative in Easterhouse and Castlemilk East and by the mid 1980s there were over 30 Associations in Glasgow.

The rise in popularity of Community-based Housing Associations in Scotland reached a significant cusp in the late 1980's when the provisions for housing procurement underwent a radical change. The new Conservative Party central government altered the arrangements for funding of housing through the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988. This legislation aimed to revitalise the private sector in housing but also had the effect of reducing finance available to local authorities. Instead, spending on social housing was provided through a new

⁶ ASSIST Architects Ltd is now a co-operatively run architectural practice For more information see ASSIST case study.

⁷ TSA also played a central role in the HEATFEST event which led to Glasgow's first European funded solar demonstration project (Easthall Solar Demonstration Project).

government funded agency, Scottish Homes, that directly grant-aided developments by Associations.

The fact that these associations were formed as a result of community activism by people attempting to improve their housing and environment has led to them being closely associated with participation in design and management. This is supported by a structure based on association membership, with the activities of Associations directed by an elected management committee. Members of community based housing associations are drawn from the geographical area served by the association and in co-operatives only tenants can be members. This form of participation in housing is now supported by groups such as the Scottish federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) and SHARE(Training for Housing Associations), and is identified in performance standards for Housing Associations .

Through the late 1980s and early 90s a great deal of refurbishment and new-build housing has been produced by housing associations, and this has been repeated in other areas throughout Scotland. However, the Housing Association movement has changed over this time, as has the political and economic framework within which they operate. Although able to draw on the engagement with participation by particular architectural practices and technical aid centres during the 80's, housing associations have increasingly used mainstream architectural practices to meet their demand. Although the high profile of participation has meant that many were both able and willing to adopt this approach, there have always been concerns that for some practices participation was a token gesture nearer to consultation than genuine negotiated decision-making. Recent cost constraints, increase in competition and tight timescales have also affected the provision of participation in design, as highlighted later in the book.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE UK EXPERIENCE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN ARCHITECTURE

Before examining why much of the above initiative dissipated in the 1980s, it is important to reiterate the It is important to highlight the essential differences, in terms of advantages and potential benefits, between Community Architecture and Community Technical Aid. Community Architecture emphasised the relationship between the architect and the client and sought to strengthen this to increase the relevance and appropriateness of the design approach and solution for the client who quite often could be a community organisation or voluntary group. The Community Architecture Fund (established by the RIBA) enabled willing architects to meet the costs of one-off feasibility study assignments with such organisations. Further work on the full technical design stage would be met from fees payable when the job went ahead. As such much – but certainly not all - activity under the banner of Community Architecture was strictly focussed on early inputs to design.

Community Technical Aid services, however, offered a greater variety of assistance, more user control and wider benefits from their continuing

presence and accrued experience gained through working with an increasing number and variety of organisations as clients over the years. Community Technical Aid Centres also sought to maximise opportunities for members of the organisation to become involved in the architectural process from initial concept through to implementation stage. Their involvement was arguably also more attuned to the financial situation of client groups, and the use of local or voluntary labour. They also emphasised the demystification of technical jargon to promote better understanding of the architectural and/or planning process. As they increased their knowledge of the needs of their client groups some extended the services which they provided to be able to respond more effectively to wider social needs. Resource Centres, managed workspaces, more generic training programmes, business planning and funding services were provided. This range of activities contrasts to the more individualised client approach taken generally in the Community Architecture movement.

Max Hutchinson took over from Rod Hackney as President of the RIBA in 1989 and promptly declared Community Architecture was 'dead': "It was not simply killed, it was overkilled. It was a PR exercise masquerading as a crusade"(cited in Towers, 1995: 217). Towers responded to Hutchinson's observations almost a decade later (1995), "Community architecture may be dormant but it is not dead. Properly promoted, its revival could do much to stimulate the development of alternative values. For the inner cities still characterised by social disintegration and physical decay, the revival of community architecture has never been more urgent" (op cit p218). Arguably Community Architecture came to be seen as a potential new area for earning fees by the RIBA and hence the professional supported this – especially to fund feasibility studies so that projects could attract funding for design and implementation. When the funding sources for such activity dried up the RIBA lost interest and this may be a key reason for Community Architecture's announced demise. Some Community Technical Aid Centres and community oriented architectural firms survived however and how they managed this in an increasingly competitive and economically strapped context is examined in two case studies later in the book of ASSIST (Glasgow) and COMTECHSA (Liverpool).

Two key issues arising from the above partial history are related to concepts highlighted in Chapter 1. While no doubt some individual architects and architectural firms within the Community Architecture movement adhered to a philosophical position of participation as a right and not as an instrumental mechanism, particularly in earlier phases, the consolidation of the movement within the profession seems to have essentially undermined this and led to a dominant attitude of user participation being seen as a means to an end – whether to bring in further work and fees (as through the RIBA support) or to ensure less criticism of housing provision (as in local government support). In contrast, while again no doubt some individual architects or other members of CTACs may have been interested in instrumental issues, the focus of these organisations was both more socially oriented (in providing wider support for clients) and more comprehensive in terms of engagement through the architectural process. This essentially entailed caveats on the power of

decision-making of the professional in the design and related support activities, and indeed in the creation and management of the organisations themselves which grew in response to demands and initiatives in the voluntary sector. Thus it could be argued that to some extent wider social participation through Community Architecture was more supply-driven, whereas that through CTACs was more demand-driven.

Again, as the later case studies highlight more clearly, the changing political and economic circumstances affected both movements, but were adapted to in very different manners. The coming to power of a right-wing Conservative government in 1980 serially undermined local authority power as well as sought to reduce government roles in the economy, promoting private sector and individual initiative (including to some extent through associations). This changed funding possibilities for the consolidating movements in a radical way and over time – while stimulating some community-based activity initially, longer term funding and development funding became focused to specific perceived ‘problems’ such as inner urban areas and away from wider state support for housing provision and/or renewal. For many architectural practices this led to a simple reversion to ‘business as usual’ vis-à-vis clients with communities becoming less a necessary option as this had become in the relative scarcity of work in the 1970s. The architectural firms that retained a more philosophical commitment then had to change their approach and become more entrepreneurial. Local authorities cut community-oriented programmes and CTACs also had to become more entrepreneurial in accessing funding, but with a wider activity span and thus funding arena. This reinforces the necessity for clear understanding of the political and economic context for engaging with wider social participation, a theme the book will return to later.