UK COLLABORATIVE CENTRE FOR HOUSING EVIDENCE

Spotlight on the private rented sector

Wales Housing Research Conference 2020

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Where I think I'm going …

1. The 'why' of it all
2. Regulatory strategies and compliance
3. Rent regulation
4. Technology and anticipatory governance

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The ‘why’ of it all

- The importance of safe and secure affordable housing
- Health, wellbeing and development
  - Capabilities and human flourishing
- Impact of poor physical conditions on physical and mental health, child development
- Impacts of spatial, financial, relational instability upon mental health (Preece and Bimpson, 2019)
- Issues for parts of the UK private rented sector in particular
- Narratives and Framing

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Regulatory policy change

- National regulation/licensing (Scotland, Wales)
- Selective licensing; focus upon rogue landlords (England)
- Lord Best's Regulation of property agents working group (England)
- Broadened and extended the range of sanctions
- Moving in broadly the same direction, but moving at different speeds
- Implementation, Enforcement
- Identifying and influencing the ill-intentioned rather than the ill-informed

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Impacts

- Early days
- Data availability
- Disentangling effects
- Unintended consequences
  - “As much as new tenancies are indefinite, I feel like maybe landlords might work harder to get people out of their homes if they felt they were behind with rent. They might be more stringent. They might also apply more stringent checks on the people trying to get into a property as well. So, I just worry that it might make landlords more defensive” (Briana, 26, Edinburgh).
  - (McKee, Soaita and Hoolachan (2019) ‘Generation rent’ and the emotions of private renting: self-worth, status and insecurity amongst low-income renters, *Housing Studies*)

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Collaborative CaCHE/TDS/SDS programme – Raising standards in the UK private rented sector

- **A review of enforcement of PRS legislation across the UK**
- Compliance and enforcement strategies
  - Combinations of tools
  - What's effective
  - Competing logics (education; deterrence)
- Social actors that (could) play regulatory roles
- Normative context/Social norms
  - Landlordism as a business
  - Ethical lettings charters, "social licence"
  - The "compliance trap"

TDS Charitable Foundation
Funded project

SafeDeposits Scotland Charitable Trust

Until there is stronger regulatory intervention, and ***indeed cultural change***, it is hard to imagine how the challenges facing low-income renters are likely to improve. (McKee et al, 2019, p16, emphasis added)

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Rent Regulation: Evidence Review

- Why is it needed? Why now?
- Considerable interest in the topic and what the evidence says (e.g. two RLA studies and one by Shelter since 2018). But significant divergence of view
- There is political pressure for (more) rent regulation, but there are many design and impact issues to consider
- Economics and rent controls:
  - weight of evidence
  - applicability, institutions
  - publications bias
  - what happens to our assessment of rent regulation when we change our understanding of how the housing market operates?
- International evidence review will aim to dig into these issues.

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Technology and anticipatory governance

- Anticipatory governance – thinking ahead
- Platform capitalism
- Proptech
- Not just potential uses and benefits but also as eg. mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion
- Short-term lets (Airbnb) and neighbourhood change/ disruption/gentrification

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- Intermediaries
  - AI, algorithmic regulation (eg lettings)
  - Dispute resolution
- Regulators
  - Data-driven risk-based regulation
- Landlords
  - Large-scale landlordism and automation

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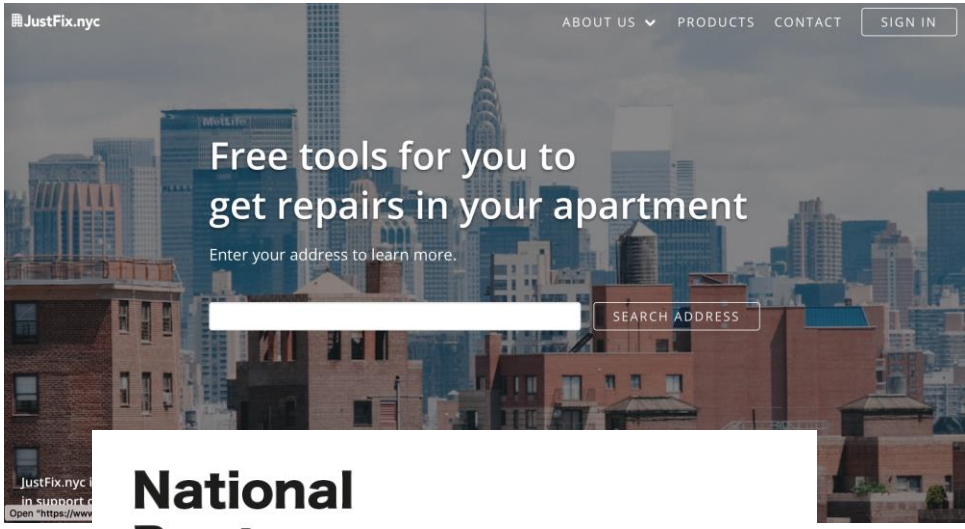
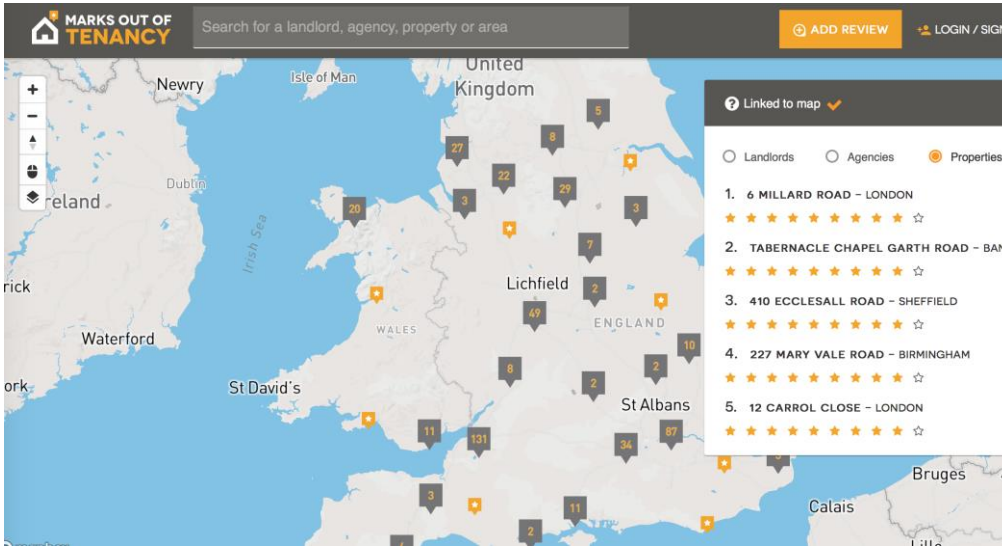
Tenants

- Generating reputational effects as a disciplinary mechanism (eg Marks out of Tenancy)
- Empowering tenants: eg NGOs such as JustFix.nyc
- Housing activism





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Summary

- Current thinking on the PRS needs to be, and is, grappling with:
  - depth
  - breadth
  - trajectories
- In ways that can assist policy development

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Investigating partners

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University of St Andrews

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The University Of Sheffield.

Sheffield Hallam University

Ulster University

ESRC ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

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