The realities of mixed tenure as a means to combat deprivation and a path to ‘mixed, inclusive, sustainable communities’, on the St Matthews estate, Brixton

**Background**
As a remedial policy for symptomatic urban poverty and a measure to promote social sustainability, mixed tenure has been a paradigm of UK housing policy for over a decade. However, despite continued faith by policymakers, evidence has generally suggested it has had mixed or insignificant outcomes. This study uses data, obtained through qualitative research on a mixed tenure estate in London, and a framework of current theory to explore the reasons why outcomes continue to be insufficient, and assess the use of mixed tenure as a means to further social sustainability in underprivileged areas.

**Mixed, Inclusive, Sustainable:**
How do these concepts interact in real life? Numerous policy documents have implied that mixed, inclusive communities will be more sustainable and stipulated that sustainable communities should be inclusive and mixed. However, there is little written on the presumed relationship between these concepts and a distinct lack of elaboration in the policy documents themselves. In contrast studies have often shown the negative effects of inequality, e.g. on education, health and well-being – three pillars of social sustainability – and that mixing can cause conflict. This research aims to better understand their relationship, by examining how these concepts interact in a real life situation.

**Mechanisms How Does Mixed Tenure Work?**

**Social Capital**
Higher income residents provide an influx of bridging social capital that trickles down to lower income residents via everyday interactions, providing them with new opportunities

**Order & Stability**
Higher income residents have greater expectations of order and stability making them more likely to exert pressure when these are violated

**Local Services**
A middle-class demographic provides the market required to sustain improved local services

**Role Modelling & Socialisation**
Fostering income diversity can provide role models for low-income residents, as contact with supposedly better ways of life shifts their goals, expectations, and, thus, behaviour

**Case Study Method**
- Took photos of buildings for comparison
- Gathered resident profiles using short questionnaires
- Conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 residents – 13 public tenants and 7 private tenants
- Used postscripts to capture non-verbal elements of interviews

**Findings**

**Social Capital**
- Bridging Social Capital
  - Limited interactions meant limited instances of bridging social capital and, thus, few new opportunities
  - However, one private tenant, as head of the Tenants and Residents Association (TRA), has presented opportunities by attracting funding to the estate and increased involvement in community activities
  - Some residents felt her leadership excluded others which has negative implications for inclusivity

- Bonding Social Capital
  - Favourites were more common between, and more valuable to, public tenants than private, e.g. mothers helped each other with childcare and school runs, enabling some to take part-time jobs

**Order and Stability**
- Private tenants did have higher expectations but were only likely to take action in their own building, and only as long as it was mostly occupied by other private tenants
  - Over time the private tenants' standards dropped to be more in line with the rest of the estate
  - The most improvements had come from public tenants who pressured local authorities to crackdown on illegal and disruptive activity on the estate, in 2002-3

**Local Services**
- Public Services
  - Private tenants more likely to use nearby/cheaper services than private tenants who would rather travel further, and spend more, for "a better cup of coffee" or "better shopping options"

- Private Services
  - Public tenants more likely to pay more for services further afield, such as schools, than push for improvements to local services

**Role Modelling & Socialisation**
- Positive role modelling was based far more on cultural than socioeconomic factors
  - Conversely, many public tenants even used the private tenants as negative models for their behaviour

- Generally – contrary to prediction – the private tenants' detachment was the only instance where social mixing and inclusion did not have positive outcomes for sustainability

- Exposure to ways of life and opportunities can shift aspirations, however self-separation by the private tenants means they are unlikely to be role-models themselves

- Private tenants could actually have harmful effects: using public services further away encourages spatial imbalances; using local private services can encourage harmful gentrification; and the reminder they serve to the public tenants of wealth inequality, reinforces negative stereotypes (on both sides) and has negative outcomes for overall sustainability and cohesion

**Conclusions**
- Evidence that mixed tenure can work? The head of the TRA arguably afforded resources and opportunities to the community. However, were these opportunities and resources new?
  - Community organisation and cohesion, without external help, had both increased current well-being and enhanced future prospects, thus improving sustainability
  - Generally – contrary to prediction – the private tenants' detachment was the only instance where social mixing and inclusion did not have positive outcomes for sustainability

- Exposure to ways of life and opportunities can shift aspirations, however self-separation by the private tenants means they are unlikely to be role-models themselves

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**Policy Implications**
- The private residents' place-detachment and lack of desire or incentive for social interaction outweigh any community sustainability benefits they may offer, as, without interaction there is no community cohesion

- The local context was important in many ways to outcomes on the estate; this suggests that more critical engagement with local contexts is needed by policy-makers

- Results suggest that policy-makers should be cautious of employing social capital as a tool for urban regeneration and if doing so should move beyond current conceptualisations

- Policy-makers should be wary of harnessing middle-class capital for regeneration in general as strategies often mimic numerous others designed to increase urban competitiveness, with gentrification the inevitable outcome

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Further Reading
- Tunstall, R. (2003). ‘Mixed tenure’ policy in the UK: privatization, pluralism or euphemism?. Housing, Theory and Society