**Aim of the project:**

The main aim of the fellowship project was to investigate how cooperative governance influences the creation of linking social capital, a vertical type of social capital that connects residents and community members to powerful external resource holders, such as people in positions of influence in local, regional and national public bodies. We identified and compared different organisational forms of cooperative and community-led housing in England and Austria. We brought critical comparative understanding on institutional design to build ‘linking capital' in housing. This knowledge can be applied to develop new solutions to housing and regeneration in post-crisis Europe.

**Summary description of project objectives and work performed towards objective**:

**Specific research objective 1 (RO1)** was addressed in Task 1 – theoretical refinement of a multi-level analytical framework to study ‘linking capital’ between the micro-level of residents and the macro-level of housing governance. To refine the model, we first revisited an existing quantitative data set on ‘linking capital’ in cooperative housing in Austria. Next we conducted a literature review and additional stakeholder workshops and interviews in England and Austria in Year 1 of the fellowship. The analysis in Task 1 led to important hypotheses for the qualitative research on ‘linking capital’ (see Task 2b and 3a) carried out in 2016.

**Specific research objective 2 (RO2)** generated theoretical and empirical understanding of the relationship between cooperative housing governance and ‘linking capital’ building. This was achieved by two tasks in Year 1. In **Task 2a,** an existing typology of cooperative governance models from Austria was tested and refined in the institutional context of England. A large qualitative dataset of interview transcripts with housing experts and case study actors was analysed to achieve this.

In **Task 2b,** the refined typology of cooperative governance in England was related to ‘linking capital’, based on theories of organisational fields. Similar to Task 2a, qualitative data on the English context was analysed, enriched with participatory observations at several community-led housing network and stakeholder events in year 1. In Austria meanwhile, additional fieldwork was needed to adapt the governance typology to fit the empirical realities. Semi-structured interviews and expert interviews were carried out with representatives of cooperative and collaborative housing in Austria.

For **Specific research objective 3 (RO3)**, we assessed and compared the contributions of different organisational and territorial cooperative governance models to ‘linking capital’. Two tasks were involved.

**Task 3a** was a qualitative assessment of 'linking capital' though case studies of housing organisations (n=12) and their partners in England, guided by the analytical framework developed in Task 1 and the revised typology from Tasks 2a and 2b. Six main housing types: Cooperatives, Community Land Trusts, Self-help, Self-build, Cohousing and Tenant Management Organisations were represented in the sample. For each case, semi-structured interviews with one executive board member or manager, one resident representative and one key external stakeholder were carried out, complemented by field observations of meetings, neighbourhood visits and analysis of archival data.

**Task 3b** was subject to an amendment learning from the initial case studies in Task 3a which found few direct linkages between residents and stakeholders in the wider institutional environment (such as funding and support bodies). Thus, instead of a quantitative survey, Task 3b strengthened the international comparative aspect by further qualitative data analysis in Austria to complement research on England in Task 3a. The analysis drew on interviews and field visits during the first year of the fellowship as well as on existing archival data. The Austrian case selection corresponded with the refined typology from Task 2b (Baugruppen in Partnership, Autonomous Baugruppen as “Wohnheim”, Large-scale participatory projects, Syndicate Model, and Cohousing).

**Main results:**

* There is a high degree of fluidity in definitions and terminology of cooperative governance forms in housing in individual countries or across Europe (cooperative vs. community-led vs. cohousing etc.). The project has identified more fine-grained typologies of cooperative housing governance in the English and Austrian context. The cooperative housing field is less homogeneous than previously conceptualised. Older “incumbent” actor groups (e.g. from 1970s and 80s) act as ‘carriers’ of traditional cooperative ideas, whereas new actors (“community-led or collaborative housing”) have become “challengers” in the field. Local organisation types often do not align to a single clear-cut model but are hybrids displaying aspects of two or more ideal types.
* We successfully integrated several literature streams (e.g. social capital, socio-technical transitions, strategic action fields) to provide a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay of linking capital across three organisational levels. This improves our understanding of the role of agency in cooperative housing niches to scale up innovations. Vertical linkages connecting local housing projects (Level 1) to larger social housing providers (e.g. housing associations) and local authorities (Level 3) occurs through intermediation by umbrella bodies (Level 2). These linkages are important in developing and governing housing, because they provide the resources (preferential land access and project funding) needed by local projects.
* We found that direct personal interactions between residents and ‘powerful’ external stakeholders are rare and that linking capital may only have temporary relevance for local projects. Thus we concluded that analysis of linking capital should mainly focus on the level of intermediaries. “Socially skilled actors” on the intermediate level actively manage the hybrid identities of projects to seek legitimisation and make projects palatable to powerful external stakeholders.
* Novel institutional arrangements are emerging in England, through a ‘national alliance’ to create a unified niche level intermediary. This may consolidate vertical linking strategies for the different cooperative housing niches but needs to overcome gatekeeping problems. Broader based intermediaries within civil society have also become interested in cooperative and community-led housing as a potential contribution to scaling up innovations across a whole range of community asset areas such as energy, food, transport as well as housing.

**Expected outcomes and impact:**

* This project has increased awareness of the re-emergence of cooperative organisational forms within European scientific communities in several fields (housing, planning, urban studies, nonprofit studies). The results have also offered a better theoretical conceptualisation of cooperative housing and linking social capital and suggested strategies for their empirical operationalisation.
* In contrast to member-focused cooperatives, ‘third-party-focused cooperatives’ have been introduced to emphasise control and ownership by a particular community (place- or interest-based). This requires mutual re-positioning between cooperatives and non-profits with implications for regulatory or legislative bodies. Findings have enhanced understanding of niche innovation in housing and especially of scaling up processes. The conceptualisation of niche coherence as homogenous horizontal and vertical social relations needs to be critically questioned.
* A key outcome for housing practitioners and policy makers has been the transfer of knowledge on cooperative housing models through the fellow’s publications as well as presentations in England, Austria and elsewhere (e.g. Northern Ireland presentations on housing developer competitions).
* Another key academic outcome has been the fellow’s role as acting head of the Housing and Communities Research Group in Birmingham and his active role in establishing a new European scientific working group on Collaborative Housing. Outcomes for the fellow’s academic career include strengthened international links to key academics and practitioners, improved presentation and academic writing skills for top-tier English language journals. All this has enhanced credentials for applications to senior academic appointments.

**Website link:**

[http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/social-policy/departments/social-policy-social work/research/projects/2015/cooperative-and-community-led-housing.aspx](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/social-policy/departments/social-policy-social-work/research/projects/2015/cooperative-and-community-led-housing.aspx)

**Note:** A figure is attached to this summary report which displays the multi-level analytical framework to study ‘linking capital’ in cooperative housing.