Conference or Workshop Item

Title: The contemporary politics of rights in UK planning and development

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The Contemporary Politics of Rights in UK Urban Development

Bob Colenutt, Northampton Institute for Urban Affairs, Feb 10\textsuperscript{th} 2012
Overview of Presentation

• Why Rights now – politics of the Localism Act
• Community Rights in the Localism Act – a reality check
• Lessons of the Community Right to Buy in Scotland
• Threats and Opportunities of the Rights for Community Action
Why Rights now – the politics of the Localism Act

• The Big Society and Localism; localities and communities against the central state; attack on universal rights;

• Community Rights; Right to Reclaim Land; Community Right to Build; Community Right to Buy; Right to Challenge; Right to call Referendums; Rights to draw up Neighbourhood Plans – to what extent are they “Rights”? 
The Politics of Community Rights

- How Community Rights are circumscribed by National and Local Planning policy
- Rights are controlled by local authorities with no right of appeal
- Absence of funding reinforces inequality in planning and land
- Community Rights raise false expectations
- New “Rights” obscure the loss of fundamental national entitlements e.g. to welfare; social housing; training; with Localism obscuring the need for central planning, and strategic provision
Lessons of the Right to Buy in Scotland

• The Land Reform Scotland Act 2003 response to demands for land reform
• Community Right to Buy in practice; only 9 transfers of land
• Reasons for minimal impact
• Implications for new Rights in the rest of the UK
Community Rights and Community Action

• Would campaigns over land and property elsewhere in the UK have been helped or hindered by the community rights in the Localism Act?

• Can the new Rights be used by communities fighting injustice over property and land?

• Making Community demands and visions

• Using openings in the Act for legal challenges
Conclusions

• The rights do not challenge inequalities in land ownership, property market or planning outcomes
• Even in their own terms they are very restricted and partial
• They benefit better off areas and reinforce the imbalance of community power
• They are a diversion from the need for strategic intervention and provision
• Wider context is poorer communities losing out from austerity and recession
• But might be used to challenge and campaign