

**Empowering Communities in Disadvantaged Urban Areas:
towards greater community participation in
Irish urban planning?
Part I**

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FOREWORD

Planning matters. It profoundly affects the way in which urban areas are developed and the manner in which they change. It can create significant benefits for some while imposing enormous burdens on others. Some areas benefit from traffic calming schemes, the creation of public parks or the protection of high-quality streetscapes and other environmental amenities. Others undergo disruptive programmes of road widening or large-scale redevelopment or become the location for undesirable but necessary urban elements, such as sewage plants and refuse tips, thereby imposing real costs (noise, air pollution, traffic or other hazards) upon neighbours. Planning can therefore be responsible for enormous impacts on an individual household's quality of life and possibly undermining the very viability of the community itself. These are sometimes known as the "hidden mechanisms of real income redistribution". Furthermore, urban planning can have unpredicted consequences for areas. Rather than mitigating the problems ostensibly being addressed by urban policy, many of the original problems facing the community can actually be exacerbated by their operation. Planning should therefore be of major concern to individuals and communities alike. Because so much is at stake, it is imperative that every encouragement and facility be made available to promote the participation of communities in the processes of urban planning, especially those which are disadvantaged and which may lack the knowledge, expertise or confidence to engage effectively in the process.

Irish urban planning has in recent years undergone a significant transformation, changing in response to an altered climate of deepening entrepreneurialism within local authorities and reformed local-government structures. It has seen the establishment of special-purpose regeneration authorities, the introduction of central-government urban renewal initiatives and the emergence of holistic, integrated local-area planning. Many of these developments has presented new opportunities for disadvantaged urban communities to participate in the regeneration of their areas and influence the planning decisions that will directly affect them. However, the extent to which meaningful community participation has actually been achieved is highly questionable. This research programme emerged primarily from these recent developments in planning policy and the current debates surrounding such changes. It aims to assess the degree to which enhanced participation by disadvantaged working-class communities in Irish urban planning has been facilitated by those recent developments.

The research team wishes sincerely to thank all those who gave so generously of their time to contribute to the completion of this investigation, notably those individuals from community groups, voluntary associations, central and local government whom we interviewed at considerable length. We are also greatly indebted to the members of the Advisory Group who contributed invaluable guidance through the initial stages of the research programme, helping to establish the research strategy and assisting in the determination of an appropriate methodology.

Disclaimer

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1. ENTREPRENEURIAL URBAN PLANNING AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Neoliberalism and the Entrepreneurial State

Over the last two decades, urban planning in the Republic of Ireland has become increasingly infused with an ethos of entrepreneurialism, growing emphasis being placed on the facilitative role of planners rather than on their traditional reactive and essentially passive modes of operation. M^cGuirk and MacLaran (2001) have shown how planning in Dublin has been transformed in response to central-government urban renewal initiatives and a climate of increasing entrepreneurialism within the local authority itself.

The transformation of Irish urban planning has not been an isolated event. In fact, the institutional and political contexts for such changes were associated with the growing penetration of political strategies, notably in the English-speaking world, by a neoliberal agenda characterised by a naïve faith that markets, despite their favouring those with greatest economic power, were the most efficient systems of allocating resources and that they should therefore be allowed to dominate social arrangements. This agenda saw the operations of the state becoming more overtly geared to serving the interests of capital.

Neoliberalism was an ideology which had emerged from the economic 'stag-flations' of the 1970s and became associated with the rise of Thatcherism in the UK, Reaganomics in the USA and subsequently became firmly entrenched in political arenas in both Australia and New Zealand. Its development is outlined by Whitfield (2006, 23):

"Neoliberalism is a conservative economic philosophy which revived in the late 1970s following the crisis in Keynesian economics, escalating inflation at the end of the post-war reconstruction boom, the soaring costs of the US war in Vietnam and the 1973 oil shock. Governments had difficulty financing budget deficits, which led to the imposition of restrictive monetary policies and cuts in public expenditure. The Thatcher and Reagan governments of the 1980s abandoned the policy of state intervention to maintain full employment. They deregulated financial and labour markets, reduced corporate and top personal tax rates, privatised public assets, promoted free trade and small government."

Creeping neoliberalism led in turn to a deepening penetration of urban governance by an ethos of entrepreneurialism often associated with managerial restructuring (Stoker and Young 1993, M^cGuirk, 1994; M^cGuirk and MacLaran, 2001). It was marked in particular during the 1980s in the UK and the Republic of Ireland by property-based regeneration strategies which soon came to dominate urban renewal policies (Imrie, 1993; M^cGuirk, 2000; Turok, 1992). Entrepreneurial styles of governance commonly involved adaptations in the methods and instruments of regulation. They brought a re-distribution of responsibilities across the different spheres of government, the community and the private sector. They also forced a transformation in the cultures of interaction between them (Painter, 1997). Modes of entrepreneurial urban governance became associated with networks of negotiation linking government departments, quasi-government organisations, the private-sector and 'third-sector' non-profit interests.

The politics of local government and the role of urban planning within this newly emerging institutional setting has been reviewed elsewhere (e.g. Brindley et al., 1996; Newman and Thornley, 1996). Much of this analysis has pointed to a 'creeping enfeeblement' of local government (e.g. Peck and Tickell, 1994) resulting from policy regimes of entrepreneurial urban governance which are typified by public-private partnerships, appointed quangos, alliances with non-government actors and entrepreneurial initiatives frequently involving property-led regeneration (Edwards, 1997; Lovering, 1995; Wilks-Heeg, 1996).

Indeed, local government planning functions have sometimes been by-passed altogether, planning powers becoming vested in alternative, often centralised or quasi-private, agencies. This could result in a significant weakening of local influence (Winter and Brooke, 1993) as planning functions might be scattered across a range of area-based development agencies, creating an almost total absence of strategic spatial planning (e.g. see Newman and Thornley, 1997). In this situation, urban planning often appeared to become a depoliticised form of development planning, locked into a pro-growth agenda favouring and closely

associated with business and property-sector interests. Broader social, cultural and environmental objectives might therefore become residualised or diluted, overridden by a centralised agenda of competition, growth and entrepreneurialism (Imrie and Thomas, 1995; Stewart, 1994; Peck 1995).

Importantly, under regimes of entrepreneurial urban governance, the context for urban planning became significantly altered. The increased privatisation of entrepreneurial governance (Barnekov et al., 1989) created an imperative to meet the demands made by economic and financial interests, especially where area-based special-purpose authorities had been created to oversee redevelopment (Malone, 1996). Effectively, in an era of reduced emphasis on direct state provision of urban infrastructure and services, growing reliance on private-sector participation for the achievement of plans ensured that planning had to comply with the goals, interests and profitability criteria of the private sector. Thus, viability assessments of public policy agendas became transformed increasingly into the requirement for private-sector profitability.

However, the possibilities for local government and urban planning to avail of the new opportunities presented by this changed situation have also been noted (Imrie and Thomas, 1993; Mayer, 1994; Charlesworth and Cochrane, 1994; Healey, 1995; Bassett, 1996). It is a planning context which operates in a fluid manner where boundaries between the public, private and community sectors become blurred. Its functioning relies on negotiative networks of resource dependency rather than on hierarchically determined bureaucracies (Rhodes, 1988). Thus, it can be argued that despite the tendency for local governments to be disempowered by entrepreneurial systems of urban governance, the new institutional channels of communication of urban governance also presented opportunities which could be exploited to the advantage of local governments.

Bringing their abilities to act as mediators and catalysts into a context dominated by central-government urban policy initiatives, it has been claimed that such opportunism could allow planners to become more central to the process of policy making and plan implementation through their unique possession of strategic overview together with local expertise and sensitivity to local interests (Cochrane, 1991; Stoker and Young, 1993). These capacities might enable local government planners to mobilise effective networks which could work in an integrated fashion towards achieving broad environmental, economic, social and cultural planning aims. For example, Stoker and Young (1993) have argued that local government and local government planners could become significant contributors to tackling urban problems if they develop a new style of operation which is amenable to contemporary modes of governance. However, this would clearly require a departure from hierarchical and bureaucratically-determined practices that are driven by rules and regulations and which are slow to respond to new demands arising from altered policy and socio-economic environments.

However, although such a shift in operations may seem to offer the opportunity for planners to become more closely involved in key decision-making processes, McGuirk and MacLaran (2001) have noted that this potential is rather more apparent than real. As the greater part of development activity is led by the private sector and remains dependent on meeting its profitability criteria, this reliance inevitably emphasises the imperative of maintaining a corporate ethos and adopting modes of planning practice which continue to be appropriately supportive of capital (Leitner and Garner, 1993; Stewart, 1994; Wilks-Heeg, 1996). Under entrepreneurial systems, planners' freedom to operate and negotiate gains either together with or on behalf of the community sector is thus inevitably constrained by having to meet the private sector's imperative for capital accumulation.

Changing Local Government Structures

The changes in planning mechanisms noted above have been taking place in a context of similarly evolutionary change in Irish local government organisation. Underlying the process of local authority reform has been the desire to develop a more participative form of local government to involve a partnership between local government, the local community and the voluntary sector. It was stated in *Better Local Government: A Programme for Change* that:

"Representative democracy can be strengthened by the involvement of local people in a meaningful way in devising new approaches to meet community needs. Such involvement and participation can represent a major resource available to councillors in carrying out their functions." (Department of the Environment, 1996, 20).

The restructuring of local authorities has involved the establishment of City or County Development boards, Strategic Policy Committees and Local Area Committees, which include representation of the local 'social partners'. These reforms represent the most ambitious restructuring of local government in over fifty years and provide a number of potential fora for the promotion of community participation in local government decision-making (see O'Broin, 2002).

Within some local authorities, further restructuring has taken place on a geographic basis. For example, in Dublin City Council a Corporate Planning Unit was formed with a brief to analyse and facilitate changes to the Corporation's organisational structure and to instill a new operational culture into the local authority's ethos¹. The outcome has been a restructuring of Dublin City Council away from a centralised structure based on functions to a decentralised structure largely based on five geographically-administered areas with staff working in multidisciplinary project teams across integrated city-wide departmental structures. This decentralisation of key areas of urban planning has the potential to enhance levels of community participation in urban planning. However, the extent to which the restructuring and decentralisation of local authorities in recent years has realised the potential for meaningful community participation at a time of intensifying entrepreneurialism is open to debate and requires further research. This lies outside the remit of the current research programme.

Locally-Based Planning

A major element in contemporary Irish urban planning is that of micro-area planning. In Ireland, this originated with community-based planning and initiatives involving the drawing up of local plans outside the formal structure of the urban planning system, such as the plan devised for the Liberties by the South Inner City Community Development Association. This type of micro-area planning has increasingly been promoted within the formal planning system and is now undertaken on a statutory basis through Integrated Area Plans (IAPs), such as the Liberties-Coombe IAP, and Local Area Action Plans (LAAPs), such as the Adamstown LAAP in South Dublin and the Stepside-Ballyogan LAAP in Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown. The reasons for adopting such an approach have been reviewed elsewhere (see M^cGuirk and MacLaran, 2001).

The integrated area planning approach simultaneously formalised a broadly conceived role for urban planning while institutionalising a cross-sectoral, partnership-oriented approach. It is characterised by the formulation of 'holistic' plans addressing a wide range of social, economic and physical issues, together with the widespread participation and involvement of local community and business sectors in plan preparation, implementation and monitoring. The approach is described by Gleeson (1999, 52) as incorporating

"a more holistic planning philosophy, with the social and economic agenda balancing the more traditional emphasis on environmental aspects. Emphasising consultation, the IAP can respond with focused strategies to address local issues on the ground".

In theory at least, IAPS should operate as localised planning mechanisms aiming to develop a holistic approach towards achieving social, economic and environmental goals, translating broad planning aims into locally-focused implementation strategies, providing for the integration of public, private and community sectors to create a collaborative effort towards holistic regeneration.

¹ Dublin Corporation changed its name Dublin City Council in 2000. Respondents interviewed during this research often continued to refer to the local authority by its former title.

The IAP approach was formalised by central government as the key element of its current Urban Renewal Scheme (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 1998). The IAP guidelines introduced under this scheme largely mirrored the holistic, integrated and participative approach developed by Dublin Corporation with its Historic Area Rejuvenation Project (HARP) (1996) and by special-purpose regeneration authorities such as the Dublin Docklands Development Authority (1997).

The formalisation of the IAP approach was the outcome of a major assessment of the impact of central government incentive-driven redevelopment (KPMG, 1996). The KPMG report suggested that incentives should be applied in a more focused manner and be contextualised within more integrated schemes for physical, economic and social renewal than had previously been the case. The Government's response was to develop an urban renewal scheme in which incentives could only be made available in specified locations which comprise part of broader areas in need of renewal and for which an IAP has been developed by the local authority.

This strengthened the position of local-authority planners, whose input and influence had been largely absent from previous renewal schemes (M^cGuirk, 2000; M^cGuirk and MacLaran, 2001). Within the IAP approach to urban renewal, local authorities act as entrepreneurial 'enabling authorities' using IAPs as the mechanism to draw down incentive funding for redevelopment, emphasising their role as facilitative co-ordinators of the cross-sectoral implementation of planning strategies. The conceptualisation of the role of planning envisaged here is integrative, proactive and flexible rather than sectoral, reactive and regulatory (see Cochrane, 1991). Simultaneously, the community voice was to be facilitated by cross-sectional Monitoring Committees which would review progress within IAPs with respect to development and the meeting of community objectives. However, these committees often had ill-defined terms of reference and, at least in the case of Liberties-Coombe IAP, represented a significant downgrading in status compared to the initial intention (Dublin Corporation, 1998) to establish a cross-sectional Steering Committee to which a 'Project Implementation Team' would be responsible and to which it would report (Brudell, Hammond and Henry, 2004).

More recently, Local Area Action Plans (LAAPs) have been introduced on a statutory basis. These LAAPs also aim to be holistic, integrated and participative and they are formulated by local authorities as a guide to the development of new areas within the broad zoning objectives of the county development plan.

The use of the Integrated Area Plans and Local Area Action Plans as planning mechanisms is indicative of a shifting philosophy within local authorities on the appropriate function of planning and of the role of participation, with the adoption of an entrepreneurial planning philosophy which asserts planning's potential co-ordinating functions and stresses its interactive role with respect to private-sector interests, public interventions and local communities (Stoker and Young, 1993; Hall and Hubbard, 1998). The IAP approach is aligned with a style of 'entrepreneurial planning' (Hall and Hubbard, 1998) aimed at minimising supply-side restrictions, providing education and training and enterprise support, while providing indirect state subsidies in the form of tax incentives (see Painter, 1998). This is an approach born of a governing context in which large-scale state direct subsidy and strict development regulation are unlikely to return but in which the failures of market-driven redevelopment policies (such as property-led regeneration schemes) are recognised. This shift in philosophy regarding the appropriate role for planning in the context of entrepreneurial governance and the increased formal opportunities for community input into the planning process marks a considerable transformation from the widespread negative attitude of Irish urban planners in the 1980s towards public participation (M^cGuirk, 1991). However, the issue of the unequal distribution of power and resources between the various stakeholders consulted during the IAP process poses a major threat to the achievement of meaningful community participation in the regeneration of disadvantaged urban areas.

Entrepreneurial Planning and Community Participation

For more than two decades, urban planning in Ireland has become associated with new and more flexible forms of engagement with developers, often involving the use of fiscal incentives, special-purpose development agencies, and joint ventures (e.g. Public-Private Partnerships) and subsidising development costs through pump-priming public investment. In Dublin, the process of change had been largely orchestrated by central government initiatives dating from the mid-1980s. City planning gradually became part of a broader city marketing process, guiding urban development according to agendas set by an urban 'boosterism' lobby comprising business and real-estate interests. This 'city marketing' became a key part of a strategy to 'sell' the city to attract international capital. Strategic alliances were forged between urban planning, the economic growth lobby and the forces of property development. In this process, the image of the city was to become reinvented, to create an urban landscape which was symbolic of economic success, growth and change. Dublin was to be portrayed as a 'can-do' city.

Key civic improvements took place, sometimes vividly reflecting the new authoritarian order of neoliberalism. The re-creation of O'Connell Street into a set-piece, ordered and manicured iconic space became part of a new vision for the city; a controlled space, epitomised by its green 'sugar-cube' trees in which the control of nature is reminiscent of an underlying absolutist ethos embodied in the design of the sculpturally regimented landscape at Versailles. In this new vision for Dublin, the city became increasingly viewed as 'designed space' rather than 'community space'. Indeed, planners' new vision for the city seemed to accord little space to people at all, at least, not to the inner-city poor. Economic growth had hugely inflated the price of land in the inner city, much of which was in large measure occupied by poorer social groups, often living in social-housing schemes which, through chronic neglect and poor levels of maintenance, were often acutely in need of refurbishment. This population was, in the words of a former Chief Planning Officer who viewed the new entrepreneurial regime with growing concern, to become subjected to a form of 'social cleansing' to release potentially valuable sites for 'higher and better' uses in property development terms. This would become particularly evident in the 'gentrification' of the inner city (see Kelly and MacLaran, 2002, 2004). Private-sector residential development increased apace from the early 1990s, stimulated by the availability of tax incentives to residential landlords and owner occupiers and encouraged by the operations of the local authority's Inner City Development Team. This gentrification process was justified and legitimated by a City Development Plan which promoted increasing residential social mixing in the inner city and furthered by a City Council housing policy which declined to provide additional social housing in city wards where over 50 per cent of the existing stock comprised public-sector units. In the Irish context, the proportion of social housing geographically is a close proxy-measure for the intensity of deprivation. It is therefore disturbing that those areas characterised by the most intense degree of deprivation were to suffer a diminution in the provision of such an important element of welfare-state support in a period of intensifying crisis in the affordability of accommodation (Downey, 2003; Drudy and Punch, 2005).

The rise of entrepreneurial styles of urban governance is clearly evident from the growing importance of special-purpose regeneration agencies, such as the Dublin Docklands Development Authority and the use of Integrated Area Plans. However, within these new facilitative planning approaches, innovative formal arrangements were often simultaneously put in place to encourage and permit community participation, such as the Community Liaison Committee of the Dublin Docklands Development Authority and the Integrated Area Plan Monitoring Committees. These held the prospect that greater priority would be given by urban planners and managers to the aims and wishes of local communities. Elsewhere, consultation would function on a more *ad hoc* basis.

While the special-purpose regeneration authorities have presented new opportunities for community participation and formal arrangements have generally been made for the representation of all 'stakeholders', including the local authority, business and community interests in planning the regeneration of deprived urban areas, it remains questionable whether meaningful community participation can be achieved without a significant

redistribution of power and resources because the community sector is clearly the weakest and most under-resourced sector involved in the consultation process. It is the aim of this research to evaluate the degree of success with which measures to engage deprived social groups in community participation are currently operating.

When considering the question of effective participation, it is useful to reflect upon the degree to which real power has been redistributed under contemporary arrangements. In this context, it is pertinent still to note Arnstein's (1969) seminal work on citizen participation in which she devised a "ladder of empowerment" in which genuine participation is equated with the redistribution of power between interest groups through negotiation. The 'rungs' on this ladder are set out below, ranging from *Citizen Power*, through *Degrees of Tokenism* down to *Non-Participation*.

LADDER OF EMPOWERMENT (Arnstein, 1969, after Redmond, 2003)

- **Degrees of Citizen Power**
- ***Citizen Control***: participants & residents control a programme or an institution, govern policy and managerial aspects, and negotiate the conditions under which outsiders can make changes
- ***Delegated Power***: negotiations occur between citizens & public officials which give citizens the power to make decisions and control plans & programmes
- ***Partnership***: power is redistributed through negotiation between citizens and power holders, agreeing to share planning & decision-making responsibilities

- **Degrees of Tokenism**
- ***Placation***: ground rules allow the 'have-nots' to advise, but decision-making power lies elsewhere
 - successful appeasement of the citizenry depends on the quality of technical support available to express their priorities & the extent to which community is organized to argue for them
- ***Consultation***: inviting citizens' opinions (surveys, meetings etc.)
 - power holders are thereby able to show they have attempted to involve them
- ***Informing***: advising citizens of their rights, responsibilities & options
 - often 1-way communication (from officials to citizens) with no means for citizens to express their opinions and no power to negotiate

- **Non-Participation**
- ***Cynical Consultation***: power-holders involve citizens in extensive activity
 - but the focus is on 'curing' them of their 'pathology' instead of changing the social structures which create their 'pathologies'
- ***Civic Hype***: citizens are arranged on advisory committees or Boards merely to 'educate' them or to get their support
 - participation becomes distorted into the power holders' public relations instrument

However, when assessing the success of contemporary efforts by urban managers and planners to engage in community participation, it is imperative not to view with any degree of romanticism the manner in which community participation was commonly effected under more traditional Irish urban planning systems. In general, this had been characterised by a managerialist agenda which was frequently highly dismissive of public participation. For example, M^cGuirk 's (1991) seminal research on community participation in planning in Dublin records attitudes which were often unsupportive of public participation, one senior planner commenting with regard to community feedback in drafting development plans that "we are expert enough to make it complicated enough for the average person not to

understand", while another asserted that planners were there to act on behalf of the public and that community *"participation is like buying a dog and barking yourself"*.

2. RESEARCH AIMS

In the context of the transformation of Irish urban planning over the past fifteen years, which has presented new opportunities for disadvantaged urban communities to participate in the regeneration of their areas and influence the planning decisions that will directly affect them, the aims of this research were as follows:

- To generate background information on the origins, aims, organisational structures and modes of operation of the different types of voluntary-sector groups from disadvantaged urban areas attempting to participate in the planning process, including interest groups, community-based organisations and residents' and tenants' associations.
- To investigate the means by which voluntary-sector groups from disadvantaged urban areas seek to gain access to the planning process with respect to influencing the content of development plans and the outcome of specific applications for permission to develop.
- To determine the financial, organisational, legal and managerial difficulties which voluntary-sector groups from disadvantaged urban areas face in attempting to provide a community-based input to plan-making and development control.
- To examine the degree to which voluntary-sector groups from disadvantaged urban areas have participated successfully in the process of urban planning.
- To ascertain the degree of importance that Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DOEHLG) officials and local authority planners attribute to community participation and the measures which they consider necessary in order to increase meaningful community participation.
- To evaluate the degree to which deepening levels of entrepreneurial urban governance and changing structures and modes of operation in Irish urban planning have facilitated or hindered the development of increased levels of community participation in the urban planning process. In particular, the impact of the new institutional arrangements (local area committees and strategic policy committees) in local government was examined, together with the role of special-purpose regeneration authorities (e.g. Ballymun Regeneration Ltd. and Dublin Dockland Development Authority) in promoting public participation in planning and development. The impact of integrated area planning and local area action planning on community participation was also examined, particularly with respect to consensus-building between voluntary-sector groups from disadvantaged urban areas.
- To compare the formal and informal opportunities for participation in the planning system available to voluntary sector groups under the new institutional arrangements with those available to property developers and business interests. This included the stage in plan-formulation at which participation is invited, the resources at the disposal of the relevant parties such as expert advice and finally, the perceived success of the outcome.
- To examine the prospects for greater co-ordination of voluntary sector activities in disadvantaged urban areas in order to enhance the prospects of success, as has occurred through cross-community consensus-building concerning high-rise construction in Dublin and the Spencer Dock redevelopment scheme.
- To address the evolving discourse within the planning profession on the most appropriate ways in which voluntary-sector groups may achieve a satisfactory degree of access to

plan-making and decision-making with regard to strategic planning and development control.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Advisory Group

An Advisory Group was appointed to advise the research team as the project proceeded. The membership of this group comprised representatives of Combat Poverty, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG), local-authority and community planners, community workers and activists. The aim of the Advisory Group was to provide guidance with respect to both the orientation and content of the research programme. The Research Group together with the Advisory Group met on three occasions to determine the precise aims, range and methodology of the research programme.

Advisory Group Participants (Advisers and Research Team):

Paula Brudell, former Policy Analyst, South West Inner City Network

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Dr. Declan Redmond, School of Geography, Planning and the Environment, UCD

Dr. Brendan Williams, DIT Bolton St./ School of Geography, Planning and the Environment, UCD

Scope of the Research

1. Defining the Planning System

A broad conceptualisation of participation in the planning system was adopted, to include community input into:

- Development control.
- Forward planning, including the formulation and implementation of regional plans, development plans and local area plans.
- Planning for the regeneration of inner city areas, including the formulation and implementation of integrated area plans and plans formulated by single-purpose regeneration authorities such as Dublin Docklands Development Authority.
- Planning for the regeneration of run-down social-housing estates, including plans formulated by the relevant local authority, public-private partnerships and single-purpose regeneration authorities such as Ballymun Regeneration Ltd.
- Planning for major infrastructural provision, such as transport or waste disposal developments.

2. Determining the Study Locations

This research aimed to address community participation in the planning system in disadvantaged areas within Irish cities. The inclusion of all five Irish cities and their environs, comprising twelve local authority areas, was beyond the scope of this research and deemed unnecessary by the Advisory Group. The three study areas of Dublin City, South Dublin County and Waterford City were selected on the basis that a wide range of planning contexts and institutional arrangements were present.

Dublin

As Ireland's primate city, Dublin provides ample scope for examples of participation in a wide range of planning contexts. It was decided in consultation with the Advisory Group that the case studies within Dublin should be drawn from a mix of geographical locales, with community groups based in suburban and peripheral areas being drawn from South Dublin County and those based in inner-city areas being drawn from Dublin City, the local-authority area that has seen the most intense development pressure in recent years.

Waterford

Waterford provides an interesting contrast, as an example of a much smaller city that has seen less intense development pressure. As a result, different urban processes are in operation. For example, the gentrification of inner-city areas and rapidly increasing land values have not occurred to the same extent in Waterford. Waterford is also an apt choice in the national context as several regional towns have similar planning structures in place and are planning to grow to a comparable size.

Case Study Selection

Many community groups with a range of planning-related interests were identified in the three study areas of Dublin City, South Dublin County and Waterford City, through members of the research team, members of the Advisory Group and preliminary orientation meetings. In selecting case studies for inclusion in the research, it was considered important that each major element of urban planning (i.e. development control, forward planning, inner-city regeneration, social housing regeneration and major infrastructural projects) should be represented by at least one case study. Many community groups were, of course, involved in more than one type of planning process, while suitable examples of some types did not exist in all three study areas. On the recommendation of the Advisory Group, care was taken to avoid the inclusion of too many case studies at the expense of gaining in-depth insights into each situation. Consequently, seven case studies were selected. Five of these were located in Dublin City, which has the widest range of planning operations in place, one in Waterford City and one in South Dublin County. The case studies selected include:

Dublin City:

- Dublin Waste-to-Energy Project: Example of a major infrastructural project.
- St. Michael's Estate: Example of the regeneration of a social-housing estate through an intended public-private partnership. The choice was determined with regard to the detailed research programme into community engagement with Dublin City Council regarding the regeneration of O'Devaney Gardens, Dublin, which was simultaneously being undertaken by Threshold and Trinity College Dublin under funding from Combat Poverty.
- Liberties-Coombe Integrated Area Plan: Example of planning for the regeneration of the inner city through an Integrated Area Plan. The area continues to undergo a high intensity of property development and land prices have rapidly escalated in recent years.
- Dublin Docklands Development Authority: Example of planning for the regeneration of the inner city through a special-purpose regeneration authority, the Dublin Docklands Development Authority.
- Ballymun Regeneration Ltd.: Example of the regeneration of a run-down social-housing estate by a single-purpose regeneration authority, Ballymun Regeneration Ltd.

South Dublin County:

- Tallaght Integrated Area Plan: Example of participation in integrated area planning at the periphery, enabling the comparison of community participation in planning in the inner city and at the periphery where pressure for land-use upgrading and land price is at a significantly lower level.

Waterford City:

- Ballybeg Estate: Example of the regeneration of a social-housing estate by the City Council.

As examples of community participation in both forward planning and development control are evident within several of these case studies, it was deemed unnecessary to select specific examples of these types of planning.

Information sources

The methodological basis for the research was in-depth semi-structured interviews (36) and a number of focus groups (3). Each lasted for more than an hour and several exceeded four hours in duration. For each case study, a diverse sample of community and voluntary groups with planning-related interests was drawn to participate in the research, including tenants' organisations, residents' associations, community development organisations, drugs initiatives and so on. Interviews or focus groups were undertaken with members and employees of these groups and councillors in the Liberties/Coombe (7), the Dublin Docklands (3), St. Michael's Estate (3), Ballymun Regeneration Ltd (2), Ringsend / Irishtown (3), West Tallaght (4) and Ballybeg Estate (4). Information was solicited on the origins, aims, organisational structures and modes of operation of the voluntary groups; the means by which they seek to participate in the planning system; the difficulties encountered in seeking to participate in a meaningful manner in plan-making and decision-making regarding specific planning applications; the extent to which they have collaborated with other voluntary-sector groups and finally, the perceived success of the outcome (see Appendix A for interview schedule).

In undertaking this research, it was not the intention to attempt to assess the veracity of the information which was being declared. This would have been well beyond the level of resourcing made available to conduct the research. Rather, the aim was to ascertain the content and strength of community views with regard to urban managers' and planners' efforts to engage them in processes of consultation and participation.

Efforts were made to interview at least one planner, consultant or other official with responsibility for the relevant area for each case study. However, this was not possible in every case-study area, particularly in Dublin City, where some officials were unwilling to participate in the research. In addition to interviews with planners in Dublin City Council (3), single-purpose regeneration authorities in Dublin (3), South Dublin County Council (2) and Waterford City Council (2), further interviews were undertaken with a community planner and two senior planners, including a former Chief Planning Officer of Dublin City Council and a Senior Planning Adviser from the DoEHLG. The degree of importance that these public-sector officials attribute to meaningful community participation was investigated, together with the measures (financial, legislative, procedural *etc.*) that they consider necessary to enhance the contribution of voluntary-sector groups to effective planning participation and to reduce the danger of their further marginalisation resulting from contemporary changes in the planning process (see Appendix B for interview schedule).

Structure of the Results

The Report first presents the results of the interviews undertaken with planners, noting in particular their recognition of the manner in which urban planning has changed in character under entrepreneurial regimes of urban governance and the impact which such changes have had on community participation in the planning process. It then addresses each of the case studies in turn, constructing a detailed presentation of the range of community appraisals of the degree to which their experience in attempting to participate in planning and development has proved successful and the barriers to involvement which they have encountered. The case studies have tried to encapsulate the range of opinions which existed within communities but the research team recognises that this has proved impossible in every case. In drafting the report, it was in large measure the research team's intention to give respondents the opportunity to 'speak for themselves' by quoting them directly and at considerable length in order better to present the nuances of their appraisals, appreciation and concerns. The difference in the length of the case-study reports reflects, in significant measure, the diversity of interpretations or opinions and the complexity of the issues involved in the different locations, often also reflecting variations in local development pressures or the degree to which the relevant authorities had sought with sincerity to engage in community participation.

4. PLANNERS' PERSPECTIVES

In addition to the planners and other local-authority officials interviewed in relation to each case study, whose opinions and evaluations are drawn upon in Part 5 which examines the case studies, three planners were interviewed who possessed valuable overview of the changing character of Irish urban planning and the impacts of such shifts on the capacity of deprived urban communities to engage in participation in a meaningful manner. These included a senior planner with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, a retired Dublin Planning Officer and a Community Planner, their perspectives on community participation in the planning system being considered particularly important due to their seniority and experience in their respective planning fields.

A Shift in the Dominant Planning Paradigm(s)

Traditional 'Rational' Planning

The three planners interviewed concurred that there has been a marked shift in the predominant planning culture in Ireland. This has involved a move away from rational planning, whereby planners act in the interests of the common good, making logical decisions on the basis of rational methodologies. Describing community participation as 'completely necessary', the community planner explained the situation in Dublin in the early 1990s as follows:

"...when I arrived, it was at the level where there wasn't participation in anything really, except kind of small local services. So, you were looking at a waste-land and you were looking at something where the City Council and the Gardaí feared to tread. You were also looking at a situation where, in the Customs House Docks area, you had a very dead zone, without any activity or any benefit accruing to the local area. Which was the classic example of non-participation, at the time. Development but no participation." (Community Planner)

Consensus Planning

The new paradigm seems best described as consensus planning, in aspiration at least, whereby community input is sought as part of the decision-making process, enabling the planner to draw on local knowledge on one hand and to build consensus through a process of explication and negotiation on the other hand. This new paradigm is described by a senior planner from the DoEHLG as follows:

"There's been a huge shift [in the predominant planning culture]. When I began planning practice, the attitude was that you did plans for people. You did what was best for them. You did plans for people not by people. People have a much better understanding now. They're much more environmentally aware and much more interested in planning. People have a much greater concept of self now. They're much more conscious of guarding what is theirs and much more conscious of people interfering with their rights and they previously wouldn't have been. There's been an embracing of community input because once you have the community onboard, you have a much better chance of success. There's a huge focus now on bringing the community on-side. And that's not just in Dublin. For example, it's also in Galway. Kinvara community local area plan, with huge community input, has been adopted now with great enthusiasm." (DoEHLG Official)

However, the community planner argued that Dublin City Council's shift towards the language of consensus planning, with its promotion of active citizenship, has failed to recognise the impossibility of building a consensus regarding the future of certain contested areas, within the context of the current unprecedented levels of development pressure:

"Well the issue at the moment in planning is this whole issue of consensus planning. Planning goes through all these different phases of, you know, systems-based planning and master-planning and all of that. At the moment, the buzz-word is consensus planning and I think that's really where it's coming at [the rationale underpinning Dublin City Council's promotion of community participation]. That it's the latest - We'll have this happy, active

citizenship, who will buy into the city as it's being re-made. Without recognising that different areas will lose more than it gains and having an active but unhappy citizenship is not necessarily a good idea, if you don't deliver on what people want. But also in some areas, where it can't be delivered on because there's so many conflicting minds. I'm thinking particularly of the Markets here...The Markets and the Liberties really because the pressures on them from developers are so horrendous that what the locals want will certainly not appear." (Community Planner)

While the consensus planning model is strongly reflected in the language and aspirations of many of the plans included within the case studies, it fails to satisfactorily address the conflict which has arisen in many of the cases studies, which suggests the operation of other parallel processes.

Entrepreneurial Urban Planning

In tandem with the promotion of active citizenship within the context of consensus planning rhetoric, a new model of entrepreneurial urban planning has emerged which better explains some of the situations revealed by the case studies. Within this model of entrepreneurial urban planning, the local authorities co-operate with developers to act as proactive facilitators of development, in addition to their traditional regulatory role. This shift towards an entrepreneurial mode of urban planning was noted by each of the three planners interviewed, all of whom are based in Dublin, which has seen the most pronounced shift:

"...the local authorities are much more proactive in development. They're conscious of their role in development much more so than their regulatory role." (DoEHLG Official)

The shift towards entrepreneurial urban planning is characterised by a new ethos of flexibility within the planning system, with a view to promoting development and encouraging continued economic growth:

"...there is an ethos around that the economy will only prosper if you remove a lot of 'unnecessary' controls or restrictions on development. The assumption is that all development prima facie is good and your only role is to intervene where things are getting very bad. And the more development there is, the better. Now, the rationale for that is of course nationally, as you've probably seen recently, they're worried in case house building fell off because it's one of the main, you know, motors in the economy. But apart from that, there's offices and the building industry generally so if you've a slide in that, you've a slide. But, there's a cause and effect thing here. I think the economy generates the demand for the housing and the offices, rather than the housing and the offices keep the - you know, it's a chicken and egg, rather than one, you know, one exclusively safeguards the other or creates the other demand. But, the developers, it's build, create prosperity through building and don't have unnecessary constraints. Unnecessary being, as I say, the key word. So, flexibility!"

"...There was a new atmosphere of flexibility too [from the early 1990s] because a development plan is now seen as, if you like, the instruction book for developers. How to go about developing the city - it's sort of a how far can you go type of thing. What are the limitations? And flexibility is the word. In other words, less and less limitations on or restrictions on development. But, the main thing is build, build, build!" (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

The former Dublin Planning Officer felt that the shift towards the entrepreneurial mode of urban planning was partly in reaction to the economic stagnation that existed in the Republic of Ireland prior to the emergence of the 'Celtic Tiger' economy. The lack of development was perhaps attributed to the restrictions imposed by the planning system, hindering economic growth:

"...it's a reaction to the old times when somehow, unfairly I think, the economic stalemate or stasis that existed...part of the package was the restrictions of planners, the artificial restrictions of planners, were holding back a dam of otherwise very good, potentially wealthy development for the city, which the city needed. Somehow, the strictures of planners, the

strictures of the development plan, the negative attitude of development plans, the negative attitude of planners, were restricting the city's potential to develop and renew itself. And that's part of a package now that's been changed, to say that "Well, if that was the way, let's get rid of a lot of those restrictions, you know. Let's push the planner to one side. Let the planner have his or her imagination be the main determinant, rather than to be writing this into a prescriptive document". And the Minister I think, in delivering the new Planning Act, talked about prescription as being not a good thing for development plans. They should be written in such a way that you can have a freedom to see your way to do lots of things, that you might otherwise not like." (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

In addition to keeping the national economy buoyant, the local authorities have a vested interest in promoting commercial development within their areas, in order to increase their commercial rates bases. Although the promotion of housing development is not associated with such financial gains, increasing the housing stock ameliorates housing need and conforms with national policy:

"So, I think that's the reason, it's Government policy in both instances. One is to keep the economy flying, by allowing development as development. The first one is a local authority interest. Get as much commercial development, be they shops, offices, factories, as you can within your boundary because you're bringing in wealth and income for the future. And why do you want a lot of housing? You want it because it's Government policy not to have a housing shortage or crisis and there have incentives and so on. So, developers are, you know, given royal treatment..." (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

By acting as a partner in the development process, entrepreneurial urban planning enables the local authorities to overcome developers' traditional complaint of excessive regulation and channel investment into areas in need of regeneration:

"...developers can find dealing with planners very difficult because they're so controlling." (DoEHLG Official)

However, a senior planner from the DoEHLG argued that this shift towards entrepreneurial urban planning should not present a barrier to community participation in the planning system:

"I don't see that it should be a barrier to communities, the fact that they [the local authorities] are promoting development. It's not for their own gain. They may gain in fees but they're for public works and providing public infrastructure. There's certainly been a shift towards development but it's not all a plot because officials are not looking for self-promotion or self-gain." (DoEHLG Official)

Nevertheless, in their promotion of development, the local authorities are clearly no longer assuming the role of unbiased arbiter of the 'common good', balancing the property rights of developers against the public interest. Indeed, it seems that assuming the role of partner in the development process has somewhat compromised the position of the local authorities in this regard, eroding the trust of communities:

"Dublin City Council is trying to facilitate development. That's the constant conflict of planning and looking after the common good." (DoEHLG Official)

Plans have become increasingly flexible, giving developers much more freedom and vastly increasing the development potential of many sites. The former Dublin Planning Officer criticised this new flexibility, particularly with regard to the development standards set out in the development plan. The lack of prescriptive limits in relation to important development standards such as building height, site coverage, plot ratio and residential density has led to heavy reliance on planners' judgement on a case-by-case basis:

“Not particularly [developers have not been given a particularly greater role in the formulation of plans]. But, it’s reflected in the development plan that things like plot ratio, site coverage, have gradually been whittled away. So, that’s the flexibility. There are advisable plot ratios but there’s no real, firm restriction on it. So each one is, sort of, considered on its merits. If you think, for instance, of the high-buildings policy, if you just look at the current development plan. You’re a developer, say, and you want to build very high, for whatever reason...But, if you look at how you judge high buildings, when you boil those down, they’re basically “Let’s consider each case on its merits or otherwise”. You know things like for instance, phrases like “It shall make a contribution to good civic design”, you know. To paraphrase, “It will make a positive contribution to street activity”, “Not interfere with established views and prospects”. None of these are specific. There’s nothing wrong with saying that but you have to be specific, when you’re writing a legal document in terms of guidance. You know, obviously with a development plan...it’s a total impossibility that you be so specific that you leave no room for manoeuvrability because then...everything’s going to be appealed. On the other hand, there’s a modicum of judgement or intervention that you can have, somewhere between being, you know, ridiculously generous and being sublimely restrictive. So, it’s highly personal, a one-off case type of judgement. So, there is that, that’s riven through the development plan. The zonings have become so broad that some of them are - they almost elude definition, to me anyway. You know “To ensure maintenance of high amenity”. I don’t know, again, I haven’t got it with me. But, “To ensure the continued amenity on re-development”. What the heck does that mean? You’ve got an open space and you want to develop it. How can you have a safe amenity, for goodness sake? So, you know, they’re highly one-off, to some degree personal, adjudication on it.” (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

This new flexibility in the development standards within development control has resulted in substantial increases in both building heights and densities being permitted in Dublin over the past decade:

“...you can intensify commercial development around the city centre, for instance, and get a lot in. You don’t have to worry a lot about open space and community facilities because the shops and the subsidiary services, the photocopying or whatever, computer servicing, they’ll all happen, you know. But, if you put in a tight community, if you start building lots and lots of small flats or lots and lots of medium-sized flats...town cramming is the word there. If you keep cramming them into an area and you’re doing nothing about the social structure of the area, like for instance, providing a local park, providing play areas for kindergartens, put it at that level. You’ll get the shops alright, that’s no big problem. But, there’s sort of a way of planning a community that makes it civilised. You want breathing space, you want ease of movement, you want an outdoor life as well, the streets should be user-friendly. And you’re intensifying and intensifying this, you’re making it more difficult to achieve. You know, for instance, just take one little example there, on Patrick’s Street for instance, where they’ve put a lot of flats in there. They open onto the footpath. That’s all right in its own way, there’s a park on the far side so you can justify that. But, there’s a major traffic artery running through it. So, you have to consider everything like traffic, the congeniality of the street or the acceptability of it, you know. You might be rearing families in the place. It’s a great deterrent to families to have poisoned air floating around the place and high traffic numbers. So, it goes hand in hand, intensification, with considering what the capacity of that part of the city actually is, when you intensify. How far can you go? So, at some stage and maybe, I think, at the early stage, you should decide how much...Whereas, if you leave it open-ended and you keep talking, you know, vaguely about higher and higher densities...what sort of communities are you creating? What sort of structure?” (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

Although acceptable in certain city centre locations, the indiscriminate ‘town cramming’ of the inner city and beyond raises serious concerns with regard to the quality of life of Dublin’s increasing residential population:

“...you have to consider what sort of atmosphere, what sort of environment, what sort of infrastructure you want to deliver, you know. Because the developer will keep on building, you know, until the thing cracks! ... People are left sitting in a dismal little flat in the bottom of a five-storey block, looking onto a courtyard, roaring traffic outside, transient population. So

all I'm saying is, community planning in the inner city, if you're talking about intensity, it goes hand in hand. And the whole thing has been simplified down to high buildings. It's not really, it's much more intricate." (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

In effect, the new flexibility of the Irish planning system has removed substantial powers from the elected representatives, who are vested with the sole responsibility for policy-making. These policy-making powers have been unofficially transferred to individual planners who, in the absence of meaningful policies, must rely on their own judgement:

"You could say it gives the initiative to a strongly motivated developer to get more than they might normally have expected. Which causes problems because Dublin's not that free a city that you can put so much development without doing some damage, you know. So, it puts a lot of responsibility on the shoulder of planners. And then you look at the planners and say "Well, what have they got to go with?" Because those ground rules are written in a development plan. They apply equally to both parties, both to the developer and to the planner. The planner can't start inventing things either. If the planner doesn't like something...So, the thing has changed. It certainly has become freer and it's become more open-ended, in terms of what you can build." (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

While the new ethos of flexibility within the planning system has greatly increased developers' freedom with regard to maximising the development potential of their sites, it has also created some difficulties for developers. According to the former Dublin Planning Officer, the relaxation of the development standards traditionally set out in the development plan has made it increasingly difficult for developers to assess the development potential of sites, exacerbating property speculation in Dublin City:

"...flexibility is causing problems for people too. Because if you buy a site, you want some idea of what, you know, you're going to get on it. You don't want it that flexible, that you're not quite sure. Because otherwise, you get crazy prices, you get huge, you know, speculation. So, developers like a bit of certainty too. They tried it down in Custom House Docks...They wanted to let things very free. But then the advisors said "Well, we can't advise people on how much a site is worth, if we haven't got a...ballpark notion of what's going to go on it", you see. So, that flexibility has its limitations too..." (Former Dublin Planning Officer).

The Changing Role of Community Participation Within the Planning System

Dublin City Council's planning services have undergone probably the most marked transformation towards entrepreneurialism of any Irish local authority. This can be attributed to its status as capital city, attracting close scrutiny from central government, together with unprecedented development pressure within the Dublin Region. The former Dublin Planning Officer was able to offer a valuable and sharp insight into the shift towards an entrepreneurial mode of urban planning in Dublin City over the past fifteen years and its implications for the changing roles of the elected representatives, the executive officials, particularly the City Manager, and the community.

Review Process for 1991 Development Plan:

Strengthening the Policy-Formulation Role of the Elected Representatives

As elected representatives vested with responsibility for policy-formulation, the former Dublin Planning Officer places great value on the meaningful involvement of the city councillors in the formulation of the development plan, as the blueprint for the development of the city:

"...after all the City Council are elected representatives. The councillors are not so much the mouthpiece of the citizens but they articulate a lot of what the citizens want, in the sense that they are the citizens when you're talking about the position of a local...elected official, relative to permanent official. You don't by-pass them or you shouldn't by pass them. You should be talking to the persons who are elected by the people to speak for the people and who are the decision-makers for the area." (Former Dublin Planning Officer).

Therefore, steps were taken from the mid-1980s to achieve greater debate within the council chamber with regard to the development plan, enabling the city councillors to make an informed contribution to the review process for the 1991 development plan. A series of discussion papers on various topics were circulated for consideration and discussion by the Planning and Development Committee, which was one of Dublin City Council's four powerful committees:

"Well, when I started to review the plan back in the mid-eighties, I realised that a lot of the policies were policies that would have been recycled. They sound all right in general terms but if you try and pin them down, they're non-specific, they haven't really promised a delivery date on anything in particular. There were objectives in the plan, the rest was zoning, general exhortations and so forth...And I was very concerned about social policies in particular because once you start talking about people, you're talking about, you know, social policies. And you get those right, before you start delivering things on the ground or promising things. So, I decided I'd start-off a whole series of policy revisions, be it transport, inner-city policies of various kinds, on housing, I had one on environmental quality...private housing, public housing, transportation, recreation and amenity, conservation. Inner city as a, if you like, a combination of all of those things...So, they were all subjects that have policy clusters that they really should be discussed when you're preparing a development plan for a city. So, I set-off on this programme of the review with the city councillors, which was then the Planning and Development Committee. It was one of the four powerful committees of the City Council, the other being Housing, then there was Engineering, General Purposes and, of course, the Finance Committee. They were the main backbone, if you like, of councillor participation in the whole process of administering the city." (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

Some thirty or forty meetings of the Planning and Development Committee took place as part of the development plan review process, prior to the adoption of the Draft Development Plan in 1987. This process, by necessity very slow, took place over several years, as councillors work on a voluntary basis and have limited time to devote to planning issues. However, many councillors seemed to find this type of detailed involvement in policy formulation very interesting and rewarding and attended all of the meetings:

"Now, it took a few years to do. It wasn't that we weren't...working hard. The point was that a councillor is part-time and even then more part-time because they didn't get any financial rewards at all. They were voluntary, they were coming in in the afternoon, they were discussing things they were very interested in. So, we couldn't really lay too much on them. We had a heck of a lot of meetings, we had thirty or forty meetings...in a period of time. It was great, in fact...a lot of them found it stimulating, a lot of them came to the meetings. You don't have that now at all, as I'll explain." (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

The approach of presenting the elected representatives with a range of policy options and anticipated outcomes in relation to each issue for detailed consideration and discussion strengthened both the advisory role of the planner and the policy-formulation role of the councillor. The city councillors' opportunities to make an informed, meaningful input to policy formulation stands in marked contrast to the subsequent approach of presenting the draft development plan almost as a *fait accompli* for the councillors to accept or reject:

"The councillors were very interested, we had a very good bunch of councillors at the time, participated greatly in the whole thing. But, it took a bit of time because you were in a discussion with them, you know. It was equal discussion. We weren't telling them "Here's the policy. Please adopt this policy". We were saying "These are the issues. These are the possibilities. Let's discuss them. We think this one would have this consequence and that one would have that consequence". Because I see the role of a professional planner in a local authority, as perhaps most professions, is to show the consequence of a certain decision, with the expertise they have to, if you like, see the effects that's likely going to have. So, you can advise on various optional policies and the councillors would bring in their own variations on that too. So, that took a long time" (Former Dublin Planning Officer).

Although, prior to 1987, consultation focused on the elected representatives, from the publication of the Draft Development Plan onwards, a series of meetings were held with community groups. The provisions of the Draft Development Plan and their potential impacts on the area were explained and feedback solicited from local residents:

“When I was doing a city plan, I followed-up. In 1987 onwards, I had invited in local residents’ groups for individual seminars. They came in, we had a shop, a vacant shop, next-door to the one where we were showing the plan. And I’d invite in, you know, all sorts of groups, not just middle class. And I’d say “Well, this is how the plan is doing for your area”, you know...First of all “This is what the strategy of the plan is saying and this is what it’s doing for your area. And we’d like an exchange of views here, if you’ve anything to say”...You’re expecting quite a lot of people to come in and to digest the strategy and then to start talking, you know, on the basis of what you’ve shown them on the wall about their area. It’d be great if you could have a time sequence in that, where it continued on for a period, where they could make a meaningful contribution on a recurring basis. You know, alterations were made, adjustments were made from time to time. So, the next time you had a development plan, you didn’t have to start scratching around, you know, from the word go on what was to go into the plan for the local area. You had a heck of a lot of information feeding into it already and you just update a lot of it” (Former Dublin Planning Officer).

The potential benefits of continuing this approach were thus highlighted strongly, with capacity-building within communities enabling more meaningful participation in planning issues, which could inform subsequent development plan reviews.

Review Process for 1998 Development Plan:

Streamlining Policy Formulation & Reducing Power of Elected Representatives

The 1990s heralded the emergence of a new atmosphere of flexibility within the planning system characteristic of entrepreneurial urban planning. Simultaneously, power was increasingly concentrated in the hands of the City Manager with a commensurate loss of the elected representatives’ power and influence:

“...as you know, the Irish local government system has this person known as a City Manager, who is absolute and has been made more absolute in recent legislation. The 2000 Local Government Act has almost made them a Prince in their own kingdom, you know, and absolute power, even in appointing staff and side-lining staff and so on. Very, very powerful! The councillors commensurately have lost even more influence.” (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

Standing in complete contrast to the lengthy review process with detailed input from the elected representatives culminating in the 1991 Development Plan for Dublin City, the timeframe for the review process for the subsequent 1998 plan was very short. In the mid-1990s, the beginning of the Department of the Environmental, Heritage and Local Government began clamping down on extensions for the five-year timeframe to prepare draft reviews of the development plans. This coincided with the arrival of a new Dublin City Manager. This new City Manager pledged to deliver the Draft Development Plan within just one year, which was achieved. However, the elected representatives had minimal input to the plan, which largely comprised updated policies from the previous plan, with little detailed re-consideration of issues:

“But anyway, what happened then was the ‘91 plan was put to bed. There were a lot of complaints about the amount of time it had taken to prepare it. So internally, they started to review the plan. And I started off, I said “We’d better get to grips with this now. The minute we have this one approved, let’s start the next one”. But, because of machinations within the authority, I was a deputy at the time, I was taken off that work and put onto other duties, put it that way. And, of course, nothing happened for some years. And that was 1991, two or three years went by, nothing happened. Suddenly, panic stations “We’ve got to do a review of the plan”. So, I think it was about 1995, the new Manager came in and the whole idea was “Why isn’t a plan done?”, you know, “Get your shoes on! Do something quick”. And the

Ministry was saying "There'll be no extensions for plans". You know the way they kept - it was five years and they had to keep extending them. "You've got to do them". So, the new Manager said "I'm going to prepare the plan within a year". Now, that was one of his initiatives and he got it within the year but, like, it is a plan that was produced within a year, as far as I'm concerned. You know, it was regurgitating what was in the '91 plan." (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

Several other developments emerged during the 1990s in parallel with, although not necessarily connected to, the review process for the 1998 development plan. These developments included the large-scale 'Let's Hear it for Dublin!' public consultation exercise, the establishment of a dedicated Community Development Department and subsequent publication of 'Dublin: A City of Possibilities' and the emergence of Integrated Area Planning. Thus, as the power of the elected representatives was diminishing, direct community participation appeared to be playing an unprecedented role in decision-making at local level.

'Let's Hear it for Dublin!'

In the mid-1990s, the new Dublin City Manager embarked on a series of local meetings, called 'Let's Hear it for Dublin!'. These meetings provided information regarding the local authority's plans for the area and elicited feedback from local residents:

"...when the new Manager came in, one of his platforms was public participation. And he organised a series of local meetings, in say Rathmines, Drumcondra, sort of, based on electoral areas. And he invited the people in and he called it "Lets Hear it for Dublin". So, he might have had, in the Civic Offices, about say 250 / 300 people invited in about 7.30, for about an hour and half's presentation. Telling them how it was all going to be very much related to what the public wanted, he wanted to hear it, let's hear it for Dublin! And they had a lecture from some planners, talking about what a development plan is, what it can do. They'd have somebody from Traffic Department saying "This is what we're trying to do to the city. Tell us about your problems". Housing "Tell us" and then Community. So, there'd be three or four people would speak like that from Parks - you know, it would vary a little. And everybody would listen intently and then there'd be an opportunity for questions and answers. Mostly for questions, as far as I could see, not very firm answers. So, that went on for quite a long time, until it almost petered out from exhaustion. I don't know how many of those meetings there were. There was quite a wide coverage, in consequence. And that was it, you know. The after-effects of it were - I couldn't detect any! People obviously thought "This man's doing a great job because they're listening to us". But, any time any serious questions were asked, it was rather like trying to deal with some of the people you hear currently on the radio with the unfortunate bus crash, you know, "Oh, we're looking into that. There's a study being undertaken. Consultants are being employed. Don't worry, it'll be looked after", that sort of response. And that was very much a middle-class type of thing because the people who were concerned about the locality and, you know, "Are we going to blot out more and more development or are we going to save the open spaces?" And within that forum, I don't think you could really reasonably expect very firm undertakings." (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

Described as emerging parallel with the 1998 development plan *"...but not necessarily connected up to it"*, 'Let's Hear it for Dublin' was seen by the former Dublin Planning Officer as a cynical attempt to appease residents without giving them any real input to the policy-making process. Questions raised by participants were brushed off without being properly addressed. Indeed, with between 250 and 300 participants, these meetings were not suitable fora for properly considering and debating the issues raised and giving serious undertakings in response:

"It's all very well, like, inviting the people in "Let's hear it for Dublin". You get 300 people coming in and having a bit of, you know, Chinese noodles and rice, you know, standing up and all very happy and chummy and meeting and everything. But, that wasn't really participation in the sense that what was it all about? Well, we know what it was about. It was

about advertising the fact that the Corpo's a very welcoming, open, geared type of group, which may or may not be the case." (Former Dublin Planning Officer).

'Dublin: A City Of Possibilities'

The establishment of a Community Development Department within Dublin City Council led to the publication of *'Dublin: A City of Possibilities'*. Although this report includes 'laudable' general aims, the former Dublin Planning Officer was highly critical of its vagueness and lack of specific objectives. It was argued that *'Dublin: A City of Possibilities'* has had no discernible impact on the development of Dublin and that public participation in its formulation has simply served to distract communities, thereby stifling dissent:

"And then there was a Community Development Department, set up under {Named individual]...The idea behind that was that there are so many disparate Government Departments and semi-state and so on ploughing money into local communities, that there's a bit of overlap and a lack of co-ordination. So, maybe that should be harnessed under a community development officer, who would pull it all together. So, he has a strong body of people there working with him, who are out in the community. He brought in all the stakeholders, in terms of all the bodies you could imagine, everything from sort of the city traders, through to you know CIE, through to you mention it. And two or three big meetings and he produced this big report called...City of Possibilities...A lot of the phrases are laudable...A thing that I dislike intensely but unfortunately it's something that administration is imbibed with every day is saying a policy but not having anything concrete to follow. It's always "We're looking into it. It's going to happen. Don't worry, your interests will be looked after"...The City of Possibilities thing, you know, you've little blonde girls round a table with a map saying "Oh, we're planning our future", then an old person being helped across the road type of thing. It's very laudable in its own way but it really doesn't get you to terms with something on the ground. The developers are quite happy to have this running parallel. So you know, if you like, it reschedules it out of the limelight. This is all taking place and people are all participating and talking and thinking and so on. Meanwhile, the development of the city continues and there's a little bit of a separation there, between what's actually happening. And administration are quite happy to have this thing boiling away in the corner, while they do their own thing..." (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

Both initiatives, *'Let's Hear it for Dublin!'* and *'Dublin: A City of Possibilities'*, promised to usher in a new era of active citizenship and community participation in Dublin City. However, although engagement with the public in connection with these initiatives was extensive, the format appears to have precluded communities from having any meaningful input to the policy formulation process. Apparently public relations exercises, these initiatives served as smokescreens while development, under the newly flexible development plan, continued apace.

Integrated Area Planning

The emergence of Integrated Area Planning promised close collaboration between the local authority, other public agencies, developers, businesses, interest groups and the local community to produce holistic local area plans covering a limited number of areas in need of regeneration. These Integrated Area Plans (IAPs) would deliver some form of community gain, in addition to the physical regeneration of an area, as a result of the designation of sites for tax incentives. However, the former Dublin Planning Officer felt that, despite strong community participation in their formulation, the provisions of the IAPs were often not delivered:

"They have these things called Integrated Area Plans...but again, they promise a lot; what they actually deliver in the heel of the hunt is very limited. Integrated Area Plan; again the idea was you had evening meetings with local residents - it wasn't exclusively local residents, it was a local meeting held to invite the local residents, to invite the local business people and others who might be interested in the area. And they'd meet say up in the local community centre and discuss the problems of that particular area. Now, there aren't that

many Integrated Area Plans, it must be said. But, they just discuss these things, they're not necessarily reflected in what happens on the ground" (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

The senior planner from the DoEHLG felt that many of the difficulties associated with the implementation of certain IAPs in Dublin stemmed from the fact that these are not statutory plans and do not have the same legal standing as the development plan:

"The IAPs were a strange animal, in a sense. They weren't statutory plans. It was up to the person, whether they wanted to develop within an IAP. Even though the [Liberties / Coombe] IAP specified heights and floor areas, it meant nothing because it wasn't a statutory plan. Development still had to go through the planning process, which is governed by the Development Plan and Residential Densities Guidelines. They shouldn't have gone to that level of detail. But, the Tallaght and Limerick IAPs were hugely successful. I had some involvement with the community in Dublin City and they were so enthusiastic. Their expectations were raised hugely but when it came to implementation, community involvement was not what they expected. It had to do with the fact that the IAPs are a hybrid, not statutory plans at the level of the development plan and other statutory plans. The Development Plan is the framework and all decisions are made within the context of the Development Plan. Also, the IAPs have been in place since 1998 and things change, parameters change. The Development Plan has to change every six years. The fact was that the IAPs were outside that process. People didn't appreciate that they were a strange animal." (DoEHLG Official)

Local Government Restructuring

Another major development during the 1990s was the local government restructuring that took place under *Better Local Government: A Programme for Change* (DOELG, 1996). This entailed the dismantling of the old *ad hoc* committee system, which included a powerful Planning and Development Committee in Dublin City Council. These committees were replaced by new Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) for various services, including planning. In addition to the councillors, who chair the SPCs, there is also representation of relevant public bodies and the three pillars of the voluntary / community sector, the business sector and the trade unions, mirroring partnership arrangements at national level. According to the Former Dublin Planning Officer, it was intended that the replacement of the Planning and Development Committee with a Planning SPC would broaden its focus from local to city-wide issues and include a range of other interests in addition to the councillors, such as the Construction Industry Federation, the Planning Institute and relevant public bodies like CIE. A specific aim of *Better Local Government: A Programme for Change* (DOELG, 1996) was to enhance the councillors' policy-making role:

"With SPCs, the rationale was to get the elected representatives to engage at policy level, as opposed to engaging at project level. So, they would take responsibility for policy-making." (DoEHLG Official)

However, restructuring the committee system had the reverse effect in Dublin City. According to the former Dublin Planning Officer, the powerful and influential Planning and Development Committee was replaced by a largely ineffective Planning SPC, reducing the councillors' role to rubber-stamping management decisions, with little meaningful debate of the issues raised:

"...first of all, they [SPCs]re so abysmally attended. And you might say "Well, isn't it great to have all these different groups"...I'll just disabuse you of the idea that I'm criticising any particular person. But, say somebody comes along to represent conservation and transport is on the agenda, they really probably don't have a terrible lot to say about it and if nobody else is there - As I say, out of probably a dozen people, two or three might turn up and the councillors, again, terrible attendance...I think the quorum should be set higher...So, what you have here is, you have the management, if you like, dictating the agenda and writing the minutes and producing the papers so it's signed, sealed and delivered more or less...and there's no meaningful discussion and it's a sad little thing that takes place. Now I don't know,

maybe housing is the same, probably a little bit more juice than that. But, that's the planning one.

So, it's a sad reflection of what was previously a very strong, powerful and useful committee [Planning and Development Committee]. And the idea was "Oh no, it's dealing too much with local things". It did deal with local things but when a local thing was a big development, all the councillors were free to discuss it. Now what you have is, you have Area Committees and the councillors only deal with planning applications that arise in their area. So, you might have, say, a councillor who's down the Docklands, terribly interested in, say, a 32-storey building, up overlooking the Phoenix Park. But, since it doesn't occur on their agenda, they're not really invited to make any comments. And the minutes from those Strategic Policy Committees and the Area Committees are brought to City Council, you see, and they're usually noted, approved, noted, approved. There's no real further discussion on any of those issues."

So whereas, previously, you might have had Mrs. X talking about some major development say way out around Heuston, very concerned about the Royal Hospital and Phoenix Park. If she was on a committee now, she'd probably be on one that didn't actually cover that area so it wasn't discussed. So, unless it's brought up as a special discussion on the agenda, which is unlikely because, you know, that'll only hold up the meeting, the Council meeting, the monthly Council meeting, so it won't be discussed."

"...So, in terms of public participation in the City Council, you have the local offices, you have the Area Committees and you have a whole lot of 'ear to the ground' stuff. But, whether that ear to the ground hears anything is another matter and whether it actually wants to hear it or whether it's actually being put into force. Because it puts constraints on the freedom of management and they'll always be reluctant to admit too much of that: to tie their hands, in other words. Flexibility is the in-word, freedom of movement, freedom of action. So, no administrator in their right mind wants to tie their hands, you know, they want to have their freedom." (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

Two factors compounding difficulties relating to local government restructuring are the City Manager's increasing statutory powers and the lack of a directly elected Mayor with an explicit agenda to lead the councillors:

"...you have a Local Government Act, which tells the Manager to get on with it. It gives the Manager lots and lots of plenipotentiary powers. You don't have an elected mayor with an agenda or a platform, that was dumbed-down by the councillors themselves. They didn't want that for two reasons, maybe. One was because, if a particular councillor was boss, it would mean the others would not be seen to have much significance. And secondly, they were probably a bit fearful of being landed with the responsibility for doing things that previously they could leave up to the officials to do. And there is a certain amount of, you know, running away from things when they get really too hot and saying "Oh well, that's the Manager's decision. That was discussed and the Manager made a decision" type of thing. Whereas really, if you're going for politics and you're a local person, you shouldn't be banging the table, you should be in charge." (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

It was felt that the erosion of the policy-making role of the democratically-elected representatives is not necessarily opposed by the city councillors, many of whom see their role as advocacy on behalf of their constituents. The councillors' role is now largely limited to raising local concerns with management:

"...the councillors are quite happy with this, you see, because a lot of the councillors see themselves as very much delivering a local service to local communities because they're the people who vote for them. And if it's parking on a certain road or collection or tidying that road or a nuisance of some description or an improvement of some description or some other complaint or even a planning application that concerns the locals, they're allowed, the councillors, to make their opinions heard but not necessarily to be listened to because the managers will, you know, dictate. They take the upper hand there, they decide...if you look up any law book on planning, it says, you know, "The councillors: marginal role in decision-taking in planning". That's what it is, a marginal role. So, that's the way you have community participation now." (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

Thus, there has been a 'vacating of the field' by the elected representatives, resulting in the increasing concentration of decision-making power in the hands of the executive. As a consequence of the erosion of the power and influence of the councillors, a public representation deficit has emerged:

"...I think the hubris of some of these senior civil servants and senior local government officials is just amazing. But, again, there's a reason for it, you know, there's a vacating of the field by the elected representatives, who seem quite happy to allow this thing to cruise on. And since everything's doing well, relatively, you know, if it isn't broken why try to fix it, you know? But, I see the retreat of the councillors more and more, in real terms. Not that they ever had fantastic influence but at least they had a forum, which was very urgent. And a monthly meeting of the Planning and Development Committee was a significant happening. And, if a councillor wished, he could have intervened quite strongly. Less so now, it seems to be dumbed-down. So, who's representing the public now? Only insofar as you can say that some of the local officials, permanent officials, might now if you like be articulating a lot of what's necessary locally, feeding it into central administration. It's a puzzle to me." (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

In this new era of flexibility, management prefers not to give specific undertakings, while councillors are not in a position to argue too forcefully with officials for fear of precluding their future co-operation:

"...they [residents]'re trying to get across to the councillors that they want certain things safeguarded in their area and they want certain things considered, you know, for no other reason than that's where they live and that's where their property interests are. They don't just want to talk, they want to exchange and they want some undertakings that these things are going to be looked after. But, they can't get this because there's problems with administration, who I don't think want to get too closely involved in pinning the thing down and the councillors, who have a job trying to get local administrators to, you know, to do what they're told, really. Because they don't have to do what they're told and a councillor has a problem if they get too shirty with somebody, they get their back up and they don't get good service perhaps in other directions...There's always that possibility." (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

Indeed, it seems that Dublin City Council's management applies the city motto to the role fulfilled by both councillors and communities in the planning system:

"If you look at the motto of the city, it's interesting, translate that, look at what the thing on the city crest is. It's "A happy city has obedient citizens". More or less they do what they're told and everybody's happy." (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

Greater involvement of the elected representatives in the Area Committee system was seen by the former Dublin Planning Officer as a potential vehicle for addressing the imbalance of power within Irish local government, which has been exacerbated by developments in the 1990s:

"So, I think to firm it up would be to pursue the local Area Committee machinery, on the basis that you do make it more than just a talking shop that takes place every month and that they do have a more strategic role for the area in which they're operating in. Then, the responsibility of the central body is to co-ordinate those various things, be it development control, local planning, whatever. And purely from a planning point of view, it will apply to other aspects. In other words, there has to be a lot more work done locally and especially when the strategic thing seems to have taken a dive, you know, from what I described about the strategic policy committees...So, strengthen the Area Committees...That's my attitude to better public participation. And engage with the local communities via the councillors...And give the councillors the ability to actually work with the local people and produce something for them in planning terms, for instance, rather than just messengers..." (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

Changes in the Statutory Framework to Facilitate Earlier Community Input

Finally, the importance of the *Planning and Development Act, 2000* in strengthening measures to promote public participation in the planning system was highlighted by a planner from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DOEHLG):

“The 2000 Planning Act hugely changed the consultation and participation environment. That’s one of its raisons d’être. There are now huge opportunities for communities to contribute to the development plan. I think communities don’t focus in enough at the development plan stage. They focus in at the development control stage, when the framework is already in place. The Planning Act wants to bring them in earlier. The development plan used to go in as a fait accompli and the public commented on it. There is now an opportunity for communities or individuals to comment prior to the draft development plan. So, they can now make submissions and comment prior to the formulation of the draft plan, before anything’s set down on paper...The Planning Act has front-loaded the preparation of the development plan with consultation. The Planning Act set the stage for participation to be much more focused. And then the fact that local area plans were put on a statutory footing, with consultation with the elected representatives. They were previously non-statutory and were generally prepared in-house with limited input from the elected representatives. They’ve been put on a statutory footing and there’s the new pre-application procedure under the Planning Act. So, it’s a two-pronged approach.” (DoEHLG Official)

Putting local-area planning on a statutory footing addresses a key shortcoming of Integrated Area Planning and offers significant potential to involve communities in making decisions affecting their areas.

Outcomes for Communities of Disadvantaged Urban Areas

The former Dublin Planning Officer described a serious democratic deficit in Dublin City which has arisen from the uncontested erosion of the elected representatives’ power and influence and the increasing concentration of power in the hands of the local-authority executive. Within this context, there is great potential for the active citizenship ostensibly promoted by Dublin City Council to come to the fore in ameliorating the democratic deficit by directly involving citizens in policy-making. However, the community planner broadly concurred with the former Dublin Planning Officer’s assessment that active citizenship mechanisms in Dublin City have tended to operate in parallel with policy-making processes, such as the development plan review, without having any great influence on outcomes. Describing how Dublin City Council’s policy towards community participation has evolved, the community planner felt that new structures tend to be established in order to garner support for new policies or initiatives, rather than to provide for community participation as an underpinning for policy development:

“I mean, it [the promotion of community participation] changes as the policy regarding what’s going to happen next changes. So when I arrived first, it was very much, well, there was no participation. And then they were setting up all these new structures for Drugs Task Forces and the world and its mother! So, there was huge encouragement of participation. And then there was consultation overload. And now they’re trying to pull back structures and bring structures together. That’s the, kind of, the broad area. So, it’s very much dependant on well, what’s the policy at the moment? So, the consultation and participation policies adjust to what is happening on the ground. Now, I think that’s probably the easiest way I can explain it. It’s not so much the consultation and participation structures drive the policy, as the policy drives the structures.” (Community Planner)

It was argued that Dublin City Council’s commitment to promoting community participation varied widely, depending on the type of service in question. While it was felt that Dublin City Development Board is trying to promote active citizenship and the Housing Department is trying to promote participation in service delivery, the statutory provisions for public consultation have remained the primary mechanism for involving communities in the planning system:

“Through the auspices of the City Development Board, I think they [Dublin City Council] are trying to encourage participation, in what you might call active citizenship. The City Council, through the Housing Department, will probably be trying to encourage participation in tenants’ structures and trying - attempting to take ownership over things like childcare and senior citizens, you know, service delivery participation, that type of thing. In terms of what you would term pure planning, that’s much more difficult. I wouldn’t necessarily think that they are trying to encourage huge participation because there is, as they would see it, a set structure through which they would work.” (Community Planner)

Perhaps as a consequence of Dublin City Council’s weak commitment to community participation, the outcome of negotiations largely depend on the individual planner or official and their outlook. It was noted that it is often not planners who are most receptive but other officials:

“Some of them go through the motions. Some of them take them seriously but there’s nothing they can do. Some of them do take it seriously and make a genuine effort to modify plans. And it just depends who you get and what’s their outlook. I won’t necessarily say it’s planners, I would frequently say it’s other officials that you can get more done with. Because of that then, you would be outside the traditional planning system. If it’s within the traditional planning system, you know, you’re kind of stuck with what the developers have proposed. If it’s other things then, being honest with you, you’re better off dealing with the other officials, like usually executive managers. Not so much Area Managers or Regional Managers but Executive Managers of housing or of development or whatever.” (Community Planner)

Difficulties in Facilitating Community Participation

Planners and other officials face several difficulties in promoting and facilitating effective and meaningful community participation. Some of these difficulties can be attributed to the structure and resourcing of the local authorities and the value attached to community participation by senior management, including an inability to deliver on promises to the community, time constraints and the under-resourcing of the provision of technical assistance and capacity-building. Gaps in planners’ training constitute a difficulty stemming from the system of education, accreditation and professional development for planners. Other difficulties may be considered inherent to a process that seeks to facilitate the input of diverse interest groups and individuals to local decision-making, including engaging communities in strategic planning, overcoming local apathy and alienation, involving the wider community as well as ‘the usual suspects’, overcoming anti-development or ‘NIMBY’ attitudes and addressing conflicting interests within an area.

Inability to Deliver on Promises

A fear of being unable to deliver on some community demands was identified by both the community planner and the former Dublin Planning Officer as a barrier to planners trying to promote community participation. The first difficulty lies in balancing strategic imperatives against local concerns:

“Their masters! [are a difficulty faced by local authority planners in trying to facilitate community participation] It’s a general difficulty that planners have, where they have to see the real picture. Well I won’t say the real picture, the big picture of “Well, development is going to happen. We have to provide x-number -”. It’s a bit like Dublin at the minute. There’s going to be two million people living here, “We have to provide this. If we ask people to participate they might want something completely different and we can’t deliver on it”. And that’s really how they feel at the moment, that “Participation is great but we can’t necessarily deliver on it.” (Community Planner)

Community expectations are often seen as unrealistic, within the wider context of strategic imperatives and limited local-authority resources. However, this is partly due to a certain level of political manoeuvring on the part of community groups during the initial stages of

negotiations. It was felt that community groups often make deliberately unrealistic demands, on the understanding that a compromise will eventually be reached:

"They're always unrealistic...and they know but that's the bidding process" (Former Dublin Planning Officer).

According to the community planner, local-authority planners often have difficulties in managing expectations and are afraid to tell communities that they are unable to deliver on a request, leading to the deterioration of relations:

"They [local-authority planners] have difficulty dealing with expectation! So when it's unrealistic, they kind of put on their jolly kind of face and say "I know what you feel", without saying, you know, "Well, we can't deliver on that" and then it gets into a shouting match. So, there isn't that kind of in-depth level of give and take. The planners tend to sit there taking, rather than kind of using this kind of almost pro-active - There is to an extent in the UK and there has been, I have to say, there have been examples of it in Ireland but not hugely." (Community Planner)

The distribution of power and allocation of resources within the local authorities presents the second difficulty faced by planners in trying to deliver on promises made to local communities. The former Dublin Planning Officer highlighted the fact that planners fulfil an essentially advisory role within the local authority. The responsibility for decision-making lies with the councillors and, increasingly, the administrators:

"...a planner doesn't take the decision, you know, I have to get that clear. A planner is taking instructions and a planner may have to take instructions that they don't like to have to take. Like, at the moment, they're having to take instructions they may not like to have to take from the administrators directly and that's a horrible position to be in, you know. They may have to tell certain people in a local community "It's just not feasible, it's not going to work". But then they wouldn't take the decision because the elected representatives or the administrators will actually take the decision then." (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

Planners' ability to engage in meaningful discussions with local communities is compromised by their inability to guarantee the delivery on any promises which they might make:

"...the Manager runs the place as the Manager sees fit, has absolute power over the officials. No official does anything without the Manager's say-so. No official can promise anything...It's to do with allocation of power and influence. I, as local-authority planner, would see myself as being an advisor to the Manager. I don't as a result necessarily have the power to deliver anything. I advise the Manager as to what should be done and the Manager may or may not take my advice. If I'm out there talking to a local group, as an advisor to the Manager, I can just take notes, talk about the problem, talk about possibilities. But, I cannot give any delivery promises or any commitment whatsoever. If on the other hand, I had sort of plenipotentiary powers, had an influence, a real management role and I suppose some influence on how money or decisions would be taken, I would feel a lot more comfortable and be able to participate. In other words, you can't participate - who wants you to participate, if you have no real power or, you know, there's no delivery possible, you know? All you can keep telling them is "Oh yes, that's interesting. I'll tell that to the Manager. I'll write a report on it" or "I'll tell the councillor". I felt that was hopeless. And lots of people would say "You can be creative about it. You can influence things without realising. Without, you know, without actually directly influencing them. You can be very clever". Ok, you're talking politics of the possible and so on. But, I'm not a politician in that sense. I know there's a certain element of politicking in every job you have, you know, there's pretence. A lot of politics is smoke and mirrors, you know, pretence and promises. Rather like, you know, any big crisis that arises in this country, it's always promises and "We'll look into it and have consultants and -". Delaying tactics! But, as a planner on the ground, I would like to be able to feel that I can deliver certain things, deliver on promises or even make promises. I can make a promise and "I'll say something to the Manager". But, it's a sort of a pointless promise in a way because

everybody knows you can do that. You'd prefer to say to them "Well, you should approach the Manager this way, yourself". But, you can't do that, when you're out in the field. So, you can talk meaningfully and constructively and technically to people and you know deep down that, even though what you and they agree should be done, it's meaningless because you have to go in the next day and try and persuade the Manager, who may just decide "Oh look, get lost! I don't want to hear about that", you know...managers say that, you know, "Who told you? You weren't really given any power to say that. I can't deliver on that! No, no, that's all wrong". Now, you're stuck! You have to report back to the people at the next meeting and you'll get blasted out of it, basically. It wasn't that the thing was irrational or anything but the Manger had another agenda. And a Manager is quite insulated from that sort of participation, by layers of officials. So, that's a real problem in public participation..." (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

Planners' inability to deliver on promises to the community presents less of a problem in relation to the statutory development plan review process, with its strict sequence of public displays, planners reporting on submissions from the public and councillors' voting on proposed amendments, than it does for other types of planning:

"Doing a development plan, it's actually not too bad because you can listen, analyse, learn, propose and pass it over as a policy potential, to either the councillors in a discussion paper or managers. But the issue is raised, you deal with the issue, you enlarge upon it, you analyse it, you propose and your report has some significance. Again, that can be got at but assuming it's not - Then it's a policy that's being discussed on its own merits or otherwise and being fabricated as a result. You've put it into the melting pot as an advisor and you advise and re-advise and so on, as it gets changed. And maybe it comes through as something significant. On the other hand, if you're on a local committee and you're told that an open space - you're very sympathetic, that open space should be kept, you really think it should be and you think the following should be done. You go into the Manager and the Manager says "Get lost!", you know, you're in an embarrassing position. So, delivery and power and influence and allocation of resources." (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

Time constraints

Both planners and community groups must operate within quite tight time constraints, making it difficult to achieve higher participation rates. The senior planner from the DoEHLG noted that the statutory public consultation phases substantially contribute to the lengthy nature of the development plan review process:

"Under part 8 or part 11 of the new Act, the procedure for reviewing the development plan is set out. There's a deadline for each stage. Without participation, at least the deadlines would have speeded-up. But, it just isn't possible to plan without the community. You can't give back-word on that. But, a streamlining of the process would have been helpful." (DoEHLG Official)

Nevertheless, time constraints were still considered a substantial barrier to effective community participation in the development plan review process:

"They're [local authorities] also under time constraints. The timeframe for the development plan is actually very tight and to build really effective participation takes time." (DoEHLG Official)

As the elected representatives of the community, the former Dublin Planning Officer attached considerable importance to the detailed involvement of the councillors in the development plan review process. Although this approach had been adopted in the formulation of the 1991 development plan for Dublin City, it was discarded for the review process for the subsequent 1998 Development Plan, in favour of a more 'streamlined' approach. Although much less time-consuming, it was argued that the elected representatives are now effectively excluded from having any meaningful input to policy-making in Dublin City:

“...I wanted them [the councillors] to understand what was in their [development] plan and how it came about and it took a lot of time. Whereas, the management now...he had two meetings with the City Council on the plan. Two special meetings, maybe one or two more. But anyway two that I know of, where they just said “Ok, right, we agree”. Now, that’s not discussion, for goodness sake. You’re doing a plan for a city, you know...For administrative reasons and for reasons of keeping things up to date, they say “You can’t spend any time preparing your plan. You’ve got to get it out fast. Get it out real fast and then worry about it later”. Well, is that a realistic time constraint? I think planning and the process of plan-making is too valuable to be rushing it. And if time is necessary, time should be made available. That’s a truism but making good plans takes time.” (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

Capacity-Building & Under-Resourcing of Technical Assistance

There was a consensus among the three planners that communities in disadvantaged areas often need technical assistance from professional planners, in order to interpret plans and proposals and have a meaningful input to the decision-making process. The community planner described her role in meetings with local authorities as largely ‘translating’ between the community group she is representing and planners or other officials:

“...you do tend to have less meetings and you do tend to have more productive meetings [if my organisation is involved], that I will say. We definitely have more productive results because you cut through an awful lot of crap and you cut through an awful lot of, kind of, the community side telling their story and the other side, you know, the city council or statutory side trying to get their point across. And I’m almost translating in the middle because frequently both sides can’t hear the subtleties of what each other is saying.” (Community Planner)

This presents a barrier to planners trying to promote community participation, particularly at development control stage. The over-stretched local authorities rarely devote sufficient resources to enable planners to engage in the provision of technical assistance and capacity-building within disadvantaged communities:

“They do need professional help. It’s very difficult for local communities to even find the language to engage...Planners found it difficult at the development control stage to engage with communities. They need some technical aid to engage with plans. It’s difficult finding the medium to engage with communities but there are lots of techniques.” (DoEHLG Official)

The senior planner from the DoEHLG had observed considerable variation between local authorities, in terms of their promotion of community participation. The importance of adequate resourcing in this regard was highlighted:

“They [planning authorities] do vary significantly...It depends how well resourced a local authority is. There are huge implications for resources, in terms of both time and man hours. If a local authority is reasonably proactive and well resourced, they’re happy to engage. Look at Ballymun and look through the IAPs. Several are engaging with children. There are some quite positive developments in some of the IAPs.” (DoEHLG Official)

An interesting new development in Dublin City, with considerable potential to address communities’ difficulties in accessing the planning system, has been the proposal to employ two planners specifically to work on the public counter in the Planning Department in order to explain plans, proposals and the planning observation system to the general public:

“...I am aware that the City Council, through what the councillors have asked for, they are looking to hire two planners that would actually be present in the Council, for when third parties want to go in and look at plans and have plans explained to them and have the planning observation system explained to them. Now, I know Aodhán O’Riordan, Labour from the north-central, put a question down on that two session ago and the City Manager’s reply was that yes, the two planners, they were getting funding from the DOE and they were going to hire two planners to do that. So, in terms of I suppose participation,

in terms of the ordinary public, that is going to be put in place. Which will be quite different to previously, where it was previously only the planning desk and they were limited in what they could actually say to people. I hope that's of some use" (Community Planner).

An extension of Planning Aid to the Republic of Ireland has been under consideration. A Royal Town Planning Institute initiative whereby communities are offered technical assistance, Planning Aid has the potential to become an important vehicle for their assistance in planning matters. However, some issues regarding conflict of interest must be resolved:

"They do need technical aid and an extension of Planning Aid to the Republic of Ireland is being considered. But, planners work for local authorities so it's difficult to engage in technical aid, as there might be a conflict of interests. And planning consultants are not going to take work away from themselves, although there is potential for pro bono work."
(DoEHLG Official)

Gaps in Planners' Training

The former Dublin Planning Officer felt strongly that planners should have a stronger sense that their client is ultimately the public, which encompasses both developers and communities, and that it is their responsibility to act in the public interest. A need for training in facilitation and mediation techniques was identified, together with opportunities to come into contact with the general public and to put these techniques into action at an early stage in the planner's career:

"...I really don't think there's a magical extra that would be applied to planning, that would be necessary in terms of something new. What I do think is, embodied in a planning course, it should be fed in at the earliest stage when a student planner starts taking a course that you really, without being too blasé about it, you're planning for a clientele, who are ultimately the public. And unless you can show that the public interest, whatever that happens to be on a particular instance, it should be apparent to you, but unless you can show that's been fully taken care of and optimised, well what the heck are you? The public now includes developers, you know - I'm not excluding developers - as well as local residents for instance. So, if one bit is being unfairly scored over the other, I think you've questions to ask. Now, you shouldn't need training to be able to assess that. But, you probably do need training in terms of facilitation, mediation, management..."

"...mediation and a bit of hands-on role-playing and in the field under study of it would be essential. And I don't think that happens, you know, in planning today. I think they just - They get the theory and then they're not really involved in it at all. You know, if you go into a local authority and work as a planner now, you'll be given files to handle, mostly development control files, or you may be given a number-crunching job. But, you won't actually be, maybe for a long time in your career, out there talking business to local individuals. Maybe, if you get promotion and that, you do get a chance. But, as you get promotion, you realise that your delivery capability is really somewhat limited, you know. So! But, that's not to say that the techniques, the training and the exercise of that shouldn't be brought in at an early stage with planners. And that puts the pressure on, if you like, the administration, to respond. There isn't any pressure at the moment and planners are dumbed down, to use that phrase again, in the sense that they don't meet the public, the screws are not on them to do anything about it, as a result, you know, the administration and so on. So, it's backroom boys stuff, a lot of it. And more up-front, face-to-face communication is essential at an early stage. So, it would be some practical training on particular headings actually in the course, not just theory, actual practice. And then introducing practice at an early stage when they're actually planning as planners, as part of their membership qualification or continuing professional development type of thing" (Former Dublin Planning Officer).

Engaging Communities in Strategic Planning

Communities tend not to engage in strategic planning processes, as the local relevance of State-, region- and county- or city-wide plans is often not immediately apparent:

"The planning process is two-pronged. In terms of the development plan, it's very difficult to engage people. People find it very difficult to raise their gaze to strategic level." (DoEHLG Official)

According to the DoEHLG senior planner, "...communities engage much more effectively at development-control stage". It was argued that communities are generally quite good at engaging with the development control element of the planning system with regard to the concrete local impacts of proposed developments, such as over-shadowing and parking:

"Communities can be quite good on over-shadowing, noise, parking, all those local, straightforward issues that they can engage with. But, the difficulty is that, unless they actually engage at the development plan stage, it's going to be too late at development control stage, if the zoning is right, etc." (DoEHLG Official)

However, major strategic decisions regarding the route of a motorway or the siting of an incinerator, for example, often cannot be revisited once the potential local impacts of an adopted strategy become apparent to the local community at development control stage. This makes it very difficult for communities to effect change with regard to the implementation of adopted plans (DoEHLG Official).

It was recognised that the increasing complexity of the planning system also presents substantial difficulties for communities attempting to participate in strategic planning:

"There is such a plethora of plans now, it is difficult for communities: waste strategies, local area plans, IAPs. You would almost need somebody full-time, keeping an eye on what's happening. Certainly, one of the barriers to participation is an increase in the complexity of the planning system. It's very difficult to be there at all of the various levels." (DoEHLG Official)

It is similarly difficult for a community successfully to oppose a proposed development on a site for which the development plan does not include any particular objectives or afford any particular protection. Wide consultation with community and other interest groups during the development plan review process affords an invaluable opportunity for the consideration of the future of potential development sites, the identification of an acceptable direction for future development and the identification of amenities for protection. These principles can then be enshrined in the Development Plan, well in advance of the emergence of any development control issues:

"...that's where planning I think has a role to play because it anticipates of its nature and prepares for such situations. You won't find yourself then where, for instance, that field which nobody paid any attention to for years is suddenly now going to be 100% developed with things you really wouldn't like. And because there was nothing waiting in documentation or consideration of it as a local issue, it never arose. And then it's all cobbled together and patched together at the last minute and the local community suffer. They don't get anything out of it all because it's become a planning application, far too late for any meaningful participation...Therefore, I feel it's you know poor really to both sides because going through an appeal process is sort of an extra cost on something." (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

Thus, both the senior planner from the DoEHLG and the former Dublin Planning Officer strongly advocated the involvement of both communities and councillors in the development plan review process, in addition to the development control process:

"Communities have to be prepared to engage at an early stage, when the framework for the plan is set down for the next six years. The other thing is for councillors then to engage in policy-making, to engage with technical people and communities. To get their input at development plan stage, as opposed to coming in when it's in the plan. That has been the pattern in the past but hopefully it's beginning to change a little." (DoEHLG Official)

The former Dublin Planning Officer also advocated a more collaborative approach to the design process, in order to achieve optimal developments for the area and avoid contentious and lengthy appeals:

“On Bachelor’s Walk, which was a major development, we didn’t actually have a third-party representation at all because we did a little bit of ground work with An Taisce. We went around and explained to them what we were putting on the site and what the developers were putting on the site. And similarly with the other big development, which was Jervis Street, a major shopping centre, we didn’t actually have a third-party [appeal]. And why? Because we thought the issue that would actually concern...the local conservation group was the houses on Abbey Street, which were really suffering and would have been demolished. But we said “Well, if we get those houses restored”, you know the ones there...way down past Liffey Street, “If we could get those houses restored by the developer and used for something... and if they could work with An Taisce on a really good scheme to restore and if An Taisce could cast their eye over some of the other treatments on the streets and get those in before it even becomes a planning application, maybe that would defuse the situation”. Whereas, if it comes in as a planning application, well either of two things happen. Either it gets refused flat and the developer suffers endless agony trying to get a right solution. It has to go back maybe to An Taisce in the first instance. Or else it gets permission and An Taisce get their nose rubbed in it. Or nothing happens. That’s not good either.

So, getting the interested groups in at an early stage. And I suggest that can best be done, where you’re talking about suburban areas or even some inner city areas, where you have an action plan, which is you know crafted over the years from knowing the area, councillors knowing it. Developers knowing that, if they want to have an easy ride or not so much an easy ride but if they want to have a reasonable development, they really have to come to terms with the strength of the local community participation. Otherwise, it’s going to be a very hard ride for them. They’ll go through a very rough ride and they’ll go through, just confrontation, confrontation. And the way that’s developed now, some developers have taken the attitude, you know, “Oh, to hell with local communities. If I go in and talk to the local community, I’ll end up with nothing, no real profit. So, I’ll take my risk and go in to An Bord Pleanála” since Bord Pleanála are oriented at the moment towards giving permission for most things, you know, “I’ll have a better chance”. That’s a bit cynical at the moment and that’s probably the way a lot of things are regarded. Whereas, if you get this local area planning thing up and going, meaningful, you should come out of it better. Not least, a better development for the whole area. What is planning about? One of the things it’s about is optimisation. Anyway, there are certain cases where planning says “Absolutely not” and then the rest is optimisation. And I don’t mean optimisation necessarily that, you know, that it’s a bad thing being, sort of, buttered-up to look better. I mean, basically good, solid sustainable development. So, that’s my attitude to, you know, to follow through on the whole local initiative business and local area committees. But, it’s not happening at the moment, you see” (Former Dublin Planning Officer).

Thus, community groups’ tendency not to participate in the decision-making process in a timely fashion at the strategic level makes it difficult for planners to address community concerns at the development control stage. This indicates a clear need for improvements in the strategic planning process, whereby the local implication of strategic plans are made clear to residents of the areas affected. Such improvements are likely to require substantial resourcing.

Overcoming Local Apathy and Alienation

Apathy and alienation present planners with further difficulties in trying to promote community participation. Apathy is a particular problem with regard to strategic planning processes, where communities are often not aware of the potential implications of a strategic plan for their own areas, as discussed above. A lack of trust was highlighted by the Senior Planner from the DOEHLG, people often feeling that their input is unlikely to make any difference, thereby discouraging them from engaging in participation processes:

“Local apathy is certainly a problem at the development plan stage. They feel nobody listens to them so they don’t engage. It’s a chicken and egg situation. I think local authorities do have to think a bit more about how they engage with communities. They tend to just put in a notice in the paper...Voluntary effort is dying out everywhere, in every aspect of life, sport, professional institutes. It’s difficult to find new people to work on a voluntary basis.”
(DoEHLG Official)

Thus, a need for the local authorities to develop new approaches to engaging with communities during the development plan review process was identified, rather than just relying on the statutory newspaper advertisements and displays in the local authority offices.

Involving the Wider Community In Addition To ‘The Usual Suspects’

Within this context of relatively widespread apathy and alienation, planners face difficulties in getting members of the wider community involved in the planning process. The community planner felt that it frequently tends to be the same community representatives that participate over and over again, in relation to different local planning issues. This is particularly true of development control issues, as applications tend to be technical and difficult to understand for the novice. The tight time constraints within which both planners and community groups operate tend to reinforce this tendency, leading to over-reliance on experienced community representatives who have accumulated expertise in relation to planning. However, it is more usual for the wider community to get involved in the regeneration of social housing, as proposals directly affect residents’ homes. There tends to be some interaction with the architects, helping participants to interpret the plans:

“Frequently, yes [the same community representatives tend to get involved in planning issues every time], particularly if it’s in a difficult to understand type of planning, you know, your private planning. It’s easier when you’re doing say a housing regeneration, something like that, you know. So, that would be much more the architect. Because when people are so directly affected, you know, if it’s your sitting room, you do tend to get involved, unless it’s in a really bad situation. But usually, yeah, it frequently is usual suspects. They do try and use different methodologies of getting people involved. But again, part of the pressure is time. Because I’ve seen it even with community groups. Everything is under so much time pressure, that you go “Well, we’ll get x, y, z, they’re good and they can explain it to a, b and c”. So, you know, everybody buys into that. Because can you get the 100% participation rate? It rarely happens. And there’s always the usual “Oh, we’ll get the children. We’ll go to the school and do Planning for Real with the children and they’ll be involved”. They always cop-out. They cop-out.” (Community Planner)

Over-reliance on the same community representatives runs the risk of these ‘usual suspects’ not being truly representative of their communities’ views and concerns, as selection procedures and feedback mechanisms vary enormously between community groups. It also runs the risk of community representatives becoming ‘burnt out’ and not being replaced.

Overcoming Anti-Development or NIMBY Attitudes

Noting that anti-development or NIMBY (‘Not In My Back Yard!’) attitudes within communities represent an inherent problem within the planning system and that planners “...*just have to negotiate through it*”, the senior planner from the DoEHLG argued that it is important for planners to balance people’s resistance to change with good quality developments in the city centre:

“Perhaps that’s why Dublin has been such a dull boring city. All the hassle that went on about those old trees on O’Connell Street and now it looks great. You have to balance people’s desire to keep things as they had been and their resistance to change, to keep things moving forward. I think there’s been some fantastic new buildings in Dublin.”
(DoEHLG Official)

However, both the Community Planner and the former Dublin Planning Officer had a different perspective towards NIMBY-ism, arguing that community opposition to development is often justified:

"In some areas, yes [anti-development or NIMBY attitudes present difficulties to planners trying to promote community participation]. And that's in advantaged and disadvantaged areas. There's a fear in all areas. And in a lot of areas, they're right to be afraid!"
(Community Planner)

The term 'NIMBY' often has connotations of an irrational anti-development attitude, overlooking an important distinction within 'NIMBY-ism'. Arguing that the majority of people are willing to accept reasonable developments, the former Dublin Planning Officer felt that it is excessive degradation that communities refuse to accept within their areas, which was considered an entirely reasonable position:

"NIMBY has to be qualified by: most people will accept reasonable development. What they don't want, when they say "Not in my back yard", there's a little more subtlety in that. It's "I don't want **that** bloody thing in my back yard", you know, "but I'm not against having **that** in my back yard", you know. There's, sort of, an inference there that's not usually worked out. And people are quite right to say "Not in my back yard. I don't want that in my back yard", you know, "because that's offensive and I can explain why it's offensive". I don't think anybody should have a thing forced on them, that's not good planning. So if you're looking at it that way, fair enough, that NIMBY-ism is fine, you know. Plus they're suffering unnecessarily...The threshold is reasonable development and if it goes above the threshold of reasonable development, NIMBY is quite reasonable. Why should anybody have to tolerate degradation? But, that's probably all people are articulating. Now, there's a sort of exclamation mark, frustration, plea, implied in that, you know, or sort of protest, you know. "Not in my back yard!", you know. I mean, "Fair enough! Let's look at it. If it's unreasonable, it shouldn't be in your back yard, of course not". (Former Dublin Planning Officer).

Citing an example of its use to resolve a planning dispute regarding an incinerator proposal in New York, the former Dublin Planning Officer felt that there is great potential for environmental mediation to play an important role within the Irish planning system, as a conflict resolution tool.

"There was even a professor, he was on the anti- group and he was a professor of chemistry or something and he was, you know, into dioxins and all this sort of thing. And they really wanted to have this incinerator, it was municipal policy to have it. But anyway, the heel of the hunt was that they sorted out what his fundamental objections were. And they teased out, it wasn't the principle of not having incineration per se, which would be a very hard nut, it was that they didn't want to have the possibility of the dioxins or whatever coming out. So, the ultimate mediation was that - and they were very surprised, the people who were against it, by having found it was possible to have this formula - that the people who were proposing it gave an undertaking that the thing was to be measured day by day, hour by hour and if there was any indication of anything going over, the whole plant would be closed down and locked up. And they gave that firm undertaking, the commercial group that were going to provide it. And the chemistry person said "Well, this was my fundamental objection and if my fundamental objection is overcome, there's no reason to continue being against it..."

"But, if there's total lack of trust, how do you create trust? And you create trust by coming up honestly on both sides and facing up to - warts and all. And eventually, you whittle down where the areas of disagreement are. Now, mediation's never guaranteed because there could be unresolvable problems that you can't just solve...not because somebody's being so perverse as to never agree, you know, you have to exclude that. Although maybe that's the way it is. But at least the arguments, the logic of it can be spelt out. There's always a logical progression done. And that's why I thought the one in America was interesting because a chemical professor had to come back and say "Well, this exceeds my expectations. I never thought the commercial group would give such an undertaking. That the place will be actually closed down and it's independent monitoring". (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

Mediation requires that the developer must be prepared to enter into an absolutely binding agreement with the community that the agreed measures addressing the community's concerns will be implemented. This agreement may be as extreme as closing down an incinerator should emissions exceed agreed acceptable limits or closing down a sewage treatment plant should odours occur when it was guaranteed that there would be none.

Addressing Conflicting Interests Within An Area

Negotiating between different factions with conflicting interests or views presents difficulties to planners trying to promote community participation and build consensus within a community:

"Yes, yes [dealing with conflicting interests within communities presents difficulties to planners trying to facilitate community participation] and that's if you are a statutory planner or a community planner. It's horrendously difficult. And this is where you always go back to your planning ethics and your role of planning, "These are the options. This is what it'll mean to that, this is what it'll mean to that, this is what it'll mean to that". And also understanding at all times, planners are not the decision-makers. They're never the decision-makers or should never be the decision-makers. But, it's very difficult, when you have councillors who will always go with a vested interest because, again, they have no responsibility. They have limited powers but very little responsibility." (Community Planner)

Community, sports and other interest groups within an area compete for finite resources from the local authority. The importance of planners managing the participants' expectations, with regard to what can be achieved through the participation process in question, was highlighted. Setting boundaries for the participation process at an early stage reduces unrealistic expectations, making the participation process more effective and productive:

"Well, there'll always be, you know, competition between local groups. It could be on various levels. It might be a local facility, whether it's a boxing club or, you know, or some other use, you know. I'll put it this way, a local community has a whole range of demands, if they could be fulfilled. And they're going to step on one another's toes because you can only have a certain number fulfilled. So, the more you open the gates unnecessarily to people's hopes and - In other words, when you're setting the agenda for local group participation, I know it's nice to be adventurous in the early stages, but you should try and pin it down at a fairly - That's where the expertise would come in, in terms of the planner. Try and pin it down to a bit more realistic expectations. You know, even from your own survival point of view because if you're leading from the rear, that's no good. Because high expectations that can't be fulfilled are to nobody's benefit. And I think, if you explain why to people and how an equitable solution is what's required, I mean, they have to accept it in many ways. But, if they're really dyed in the wool and there's obnoxious individuals who are not going to give way, I'm afraid reason has to be seen eventually and there's no other way around it. But, there are conflicting interests." (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

The potential of environmental mediation as a conflict resolution technique was highlighted:

"One of the conflicting interests is between, say, developers who want to develop what is an amenity in an area and the local people who want to keep it open. Well, this is where mediation might have a role to play, environmental mediation. If you get both sides to agree, you know, the developer can't have everything they want, the local community can't really maintain the status quo...forever and ever but both would gain if a reasonable agreement is reached. That reasonable agreement, I think in many cases, has to be between the two parties and that's where mediation is interesting. As a planner, you're not the mediator necessarily. You know about mediation? It's both parties agreeing. A mediator is a facilitator to an extent but they don't get involved in the solution. They might get involved in the writing of the solution but there has to be agreement between the parties. Now, you may need an input of a planner, to point out to them at some stage that "Look, the status quo can't be retained and there is a necessity here for not so much a compromise as a solution to come

out, which is agreeable to both parties” and then the mediation process takes place. So, I think the role of mediation might be looked into...You know, there’s always going to be people who, for some reason or past experience, are not going to give an inch, you know. Not an inch! But, that’s not the real world. So, for conflicting interests, the role of mediation should be considered.” (Former Dublin Planning Officer)

5. CASE STUDIES

5.1. THE REGENERATION OF ST. MICHAEL'S ESTATE, INCHICORE

Context

Constructed in the 1970s, St. Michael's Estate originally comprised 346 flats in two- to eight-storey blocks. These flats were owned by Dublin City Council and were entirely social-rented. Initially popular with tenants, a former resident recalled the community spirit that existed in the early years of St. Michael's Estate:

"That was a hugely vibrant community...NATO, the National Association of Tenants' Organisations, was actually founded by people who were involved in St. Michael's Estate, in residents' work...I'd have went to school with their kids and that now and all of their parents were always involved...Like the Parish Centre, I can remember all the families contributing like fifty pence a week, on their residents' fees to the tenants' organisation, to actually help get that built. And like that went on for about seven years because they had no other way of getting money together. Like there was no like 'Come up with money and you'll get matched funding from the Government'. There was none of that existed back then, whatsoever. It was a case of 'We need x amount of money to do this and we have to wait until we get that money up. And when we have that money, we'll get it done'. So, there was always a huge sense of community." (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

However, the £5,000 surrender grant scheme, the effects of which have been well-documented (Threshold, 1987), resulted in an exodus of community leaders in the late 1980s, with a devastating impact on the community:

"...if you want to trace it back, the £5,000 grant in the mid-eighties, that scheme that they set up...St. Michael's Estate lost all of its leadership over that...it was really to fill the houses in Tallaght and Clondalkin. They had built these massive estates and they needed...a good mix of people. They...needed good leaders, an equal amount of them as there were problem families going into it. But, what they...created in St. Michael's Estate was a transient population of people who were just going into St. Michael's Estate, staying for six months or a year, to build up their points, to build up there case, to get a house out of it. So, they had no interest, there was no investment in St. Michael's Estate or in the community, whatsoever. They were not planning on staying there. And I mean, I'm sure if you looked at the books on St. Michael's Estate and the amount of people who've lived there, you'll probably find there's like 20,000 people who've lived there, over the last twenty years or so, you know. Because it has just turned over that amount of people." (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

This loss of community leadership was compounded by poor allocations policies and under-investment in management and maintenance on the part of Dublin City Council. This led to the flats becoming run-down, the escalation of drugs problems and the population becoming more transient. These factors combined to make living conditions in St. Michael's Estate very difficult:

"...it's places like St. Michael's Estate, when they're run-down like that...anyone who's just living on the fringes will be attracted to a place like that. When heroine was at its peak, if I can put it that way, in usage terms...St. Michael's Estate was a place you could go and there was lots of people dealing heroine from there. And the only reason they were doing it was because they were allowed to. The police were not policing it. City Council were not looking at getting involved and trying to sort out people who were living there who were dealing. They weren't interested! There was nothing in it for them apart from hassle so they never bothered with it." (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

Tenant Participation in Housing Management

In the mid-1980s, the residents of St. Michael's Estate began to campaign for a better service from Dublin City Council. A tenants' committee, called the Blocks Committee, comprising elected representatives of each block of flats on the estate, was established for

this purpose. The Blocks Committee's role was primarily to lobby for the improvement of maintenance services, the delivery of refurbishment programmes and the provision of other amenities, such as playgrounds:

"They were saying that they were local people, they couldn't be getting involved openly in anti-social, evictions or anything like that. They said they couldn't so they saw their roles as local reps...as trying to keep up the quality of maintenance and the delivery of maintenance. Then also, of course, promises that had been made about refurbishment, they saw their role as making sure they were delivered on. And any other resources that were needed in the area...they would be lobbying." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

Dublin City Council responded by opening one of the flats as an estate office and developing a higher profile on the estate:

"They opened an estate office, so it was a locally based office where people could go and air their complaints about maintenance and lifts being broken and all that kind of stuff. That came very much from the lobbying of the Community Development Project..." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

Dublin City Council's first foray into community participation in St. Michael's Estate was in the mid-1990s, with the introduction of a new system of tenant participation in housing management. Three local women became involved in managing the estate, particularly in the allocations process:

"It would be an informal arrangement. They might just run by one or two people and say 'Do you know so and so? They're looking for a flat here' and... 'What do you think? What's your view on it?'... They mightn't take it but they would just get a suss on whether the person was of good character or whatever. There was no formalised arrangement in any way." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

This tenant input into estate management was quite limited and was described as 'tokenistic':

"...when they had the estate office, there was three of them involved in the estate office... But to be honest with you, their role with the estate office was very small, a minor role. They didn't have a very good active role of real decision-making stuff... It was more tokenistic, if you ask me..." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

Even this limited system of tenant participation in housing management was abruptly discontinued, as a result of a change of personnel and concerns regarding confidentiality:

"They did up the rooms here and they got new offices and then the Manager at the time... he just sort of said nicely to the women... 'We're changing the way we're doing things. We don't really need their services any more locally because of confidentiality and that sort of thing'. So, they kind of nicely dropped them. Which to me, to be honest with you, was a very, very disrespectful way of treating local people..." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

As a consequence of its poor management and maintenance record, together with the lack of success of its first foray into tenant participation, Dublin City Council did not have a very strong relationship with the residents of St. Michael's Estate on which to build. Subsequent negotiations regarding the regeneration of St. Michael's Estate would have to overcome deep-rooted resentment and mistrust within this marginalised community, in order to be successful.

Plans for Refurbishment and the Decision to Demolish

From 1986, various different plans for the refurbishment of St. Michael's Estate were drawn up by Dublin City Council, culminating in a commitment of IR£1 million under the Remedial Works Scheme in 1992:

"In 1992 [named individual, resident of St. Michael's Estate] had a meeting with Bertie Aherne. She trapped him in a lift in block eight! And the outcome of that was a commitment for a million pound for refurbishing St. Michael's Estate...And that's what actually started the process. It rolled on for three or four years, trying to get this million pound spent on refurbishment and what to spend it on and so on and so forth." (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

However, the promised funding was not forthcoming and none of these refurbishment plans came to fruition. St. Michael's Estate Working Group, comprising representatives of the Blocks Committee, the Family Resource Centre, the parish and local voluntary groups, was established to lobby Dublin City Council for change. Pressure for action from the community resulted in the establishment of St. Michael's Estate Task Force in 1997. The relevant statutory agencies were represented on this Task Force, including Dublin City Council, the South Western Area Health Board and the Gardaí, in addition to representatives of the community sector, including the Family Resource Centre, the Blocks Committee and the Canals Community Partnership Company (St. Michael's Estate Regeneration Team, 2004). The Task Force's first job was to commission independent research on the tenants' needs and preferences regarding the future of St. Michael's Estate. This research was undertaken in 1998 and revealed that almost all of the tenants felt that the site should continue to be used to provide local authority housing, with little support for selling any of the land to a private developer. 64.7% of the tenants were in favour of the demolition of the flats and their replacement with two-storey houses with front and back gardens (St. Michael's Estate Regeneration Team, 2004). Although this preference for demolition and redevelopment was not universal, the majority of the tenants were in favour:

"They put it to people, they gave people choices and one of the choices was, you know, 'to demolish the flats and build houses'. So, once people heard that, they thought 'Oh, yeah. Absolutely!' Now, there was also a lot of people who actually rejected that, that didn't want to actually knock the flats down. They still wanted the flats refurbished. But, it's a case of who turns up at the meeting on the night and that's who decided to knock the flats down. So, it was a given thing that they'd be demolished." (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

The poor housing management and maintenance services delivered by Dublin City Council in the late-1990s and unchecked drugs-related anti-social behaviour, were key factors influencing this majority preference for demolition:

"...at the time, St. Michael's Estate was going through a very bad time with the drugs. There were a lot people around the area that were actually dealing and wheeling, taking. There was a lot of activity around that time...And at the time, the quality of maintenance wouldn't have been as good or the follow-up on maintenance wouldn't have been as good as it is now...So, it was in that context, I think, that they made that decision [to opt for demolition]." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

De-tenanting and Re-introduction of Arm's-Length Management

Since the decision to demolish the blocks of flats was made, an unwritten but very apparent policy of de-tenanting has been implemented in St. Michael's Estate. There has been a stay on allocations into St. Michael's Estate, while tenants seeking transfers out of the estate seem to have been prioritised:

"...since 1998...since there was a decision made to knock down the flats, Dublin City Council stopped allocating people in here. So that, instead of allocating in, there was a policy from 1998 really, to begin to give people transfers out of here because this place then was under regeneration and the normal thing that happens is you need to empty the place...So, there was a stay on allocations." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

"...people who are going down looking for transfers and that, they're being sorted out very quickly." (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

One tenant who decided to apply to transfer out of St. Michael's Estate in 2004 to a three-bedroom house was astonished by Dublin City Council's quick response:

"...when we put in the application for this house right, because this mystifies me altogether, we put in the application for this house and less than two weeks later, we got it. Less than two weeks later, it was done!" (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

"If they managed to actually empty the place, it's a lot easier for them to do what they want. And although it may not be a visible target of theirs, you know, you may not be able to see it as a target of theirs but it's definitely a better option for them. If St. Michael's Estate was empty, it'd be a lot easier... when we went down and put in the application for a transfer, they must have been jumping off the roofs 'Lovely, we can get rid of him now!'...which is probably why my house got sorted out very quickly. And maybe it was just a coincidence that this house came up because...you don't get three-bedrooms coming up that often and there's normally a long list for them. Because even...the person that I was dealing down at the City Council offices had said to me like...even a buy back might not be an option because the three-beds are just too expensive. They may not get funding to buy a three-bedroom back. So, what she was saying to me essentially was that I could be waiting a while for a three-bed. And then lo and behold, less than two weeks later, I get offered this. I was like 'Something's amiss there somewhere'." (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

As a consequence of Dublin City Council's policy of de-tenanting, the number of people living in St. Michael's Estate has dropped dramatically, from about 220 tenants to just 55. The tenants felt this was a deliberate attempt on the part of Dublin City Council to further weaken their influence over decisions regarding the future of the estate:

"...when we started this process, we had...I think it was 220 in total residents in St. Michael's, when we started on the last plan. Now, they de-tenanted one, two, and three and the senior cits, which a lot of people went to Emmet Crescent and Bulfin Court, the senior citizens' place. But an equal amount, if not more people, actually left the flats. Now, once that had finished, they were left then with sixty-odd residents...left in blocks four to ten and that has just dropped. That was when they changed. That was when everything changed. Because they came back to us then and said 'We don't really need 170 local authority houses because there is only sixty of you'. And our answer was 'Yeah, but it's never really been just about us. This is about regenerating and having a new community and new communities don't exist just with old people, you have to bring in the new as well'. Ever since then, everything changed. Now, I don't know whether they thought 'Well, ok, we have the weight of the arguments on our side now, so we can do what we want. They don't have any arguments left now. And in fact, those people will probably leave, once we don't do anything with the place'. And again, I might just be being cynical. Maybe they never said that, maybe those conversations never happened. But, the net effect has been that that's what has actually happened on the ground in St. Michael's Estate because people are leaving and they are being sorted out very quickly. So, there may not be any official line that people in St. Michael's Estate get priority but most definitely underneath it all, they are definitely being given a priority." (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

With the opening of an Area Office for the south-west inner city, the estate office was closed and arms-length management re-introduced. This eroded the trust which had begun to develop between Dublin City Council and the tenants of St. Michael's Estate:

"...there was no time before that where we were in...intense negotiations, where we actually had time to build up a relationship with these people. We did have it but they pulled away. Once they opened up the local office, they moved off the estate...I can remember having a conversation with a guy from the anti-social department and he was saying...'They really dropped the ball there'...'We were actually getting into a situation where we had a good working relationship with people there'. And once they moved off the estate, the mistrust! The trust just went because they just pulled away from everything that they were doing. And they were, like, they were making good strides. Like, They were getting through the anti-social stuff. Like, you could start to see changes were happening because the residents and the City

Council were working together actually on the estate and they were on-site. So, they were constantly visible so you could see that things were happening and things were changing, like. You know, even like on maintenance, it was actually starting to look good. You know like I mean, they were getting stuff done. You'd put the report in and something would actually get done with it, it wouldn't just get lost in the system as before. And it just changed the whole nature of the relationship...It made it worse then...Which is probably why it took so long to get into a situation where you could actually sit down and have a working relationship with people.” (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

Thus, the de-tenanting of St. Michael's Estate was accompanied by the withdrawal of proper management and maintenance services. Anti-social behaviour escalated once again, including underage drinking, assaults and joyriding:

“It's just a fucking nightmare because they do very little. Like, in my eight-storey block that we were living in, like there's only like twelve people left living in it and like that just leaves lots of void spaces for kids. I mean like, the amount of like kids drinking in the estate and I'm not saying they're all from the estate either. The amount of kids that are in drinking in the estate in the weekends, it's just atrocious. Like, some of the things that are going on. Like, there was a guy going into his flat, he was attacked by a load of kids that were drinking and he ran out of the place and never came back. And I only found out about that three weeks after it happened. And that's how bad it is on the estate! Like, when you can live on a block next to where something like that happens and not know about it for three weeks, you know. And I'm not saying it says a lot about the people who are living there. It says a lot about the way the place is run or not run, for that matter.” (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

“...the anti-social element in St. Michael's Estate now has just gone off the scale again. Like, robbed cars every day of the week now, again. And this is just, like, one small gang of teenagers. And that's purely from lack of attention. Not from us now, it's lack of attention from City Council and the Gards because they have been told. They've been rang, they've been reported and they have done nothing to try and secure people's homes up there. I mean, that's what actually drove us out, in the end.” (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

Similarly, Dublin City Council began to fail to respond to even urgent maintenance requests:

“...there isn't an interest for City Council in it. And, you know, the reason why there's no interest in it for them, it's because there's nothing but grief in it for them...Well, that has to be their attitude because they never do anything with the place...Like, maintenance...the last meeting we had with [named individual, Assistant City Manager], we informed him that blocks nine and ten, that there was foul water coming out of the taps. And he was like in shock, alarm bells were going off 'We'll have to sort it out tomorrow'. And that was, like, three months ago and still nothing done about it! You know what I mean? It's this whole thing where they come to you and they paint a gorgeous picture for you and then just walk away...and don't do anything...And this happens across the board, now...I fail to understand it, I really do now. I just can't understand why it's like that. Like...it doesn't serve anyone and it serves them least of all because they're the ones, no matter if they leave it till next year or the next ten years, they're the ones who are going to have to deal with it regardless...because it's their responsibility. So, why not do it now...?” (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

Dublin City Council reasoned that expenditure on the flats complex should be minimised, as they were soon to be demolished. However, a former resident felt that the withdrawal of proper management and maintenance services was a deliberate strategy to encourage the remaining tenants to transfer out of St. Michael's Estate:

“They're in a prime position, right. They don't have to make an effort on anything now, they can sit back...Maybe I am just being cynical and maybe there isn't an actual approach...to do this but it definitely seems like they're quite happy to sit back and not do anything with St. Michael's. Now, they can sit back and say 'Well...it's being knocked down so...we can't go to our bosses and say 'Look...we need twenty grand for this and forty grand for that and 150 grand for that' and then we're also telling them 'Oh yeah and then in six months' time we're knocking the whole lot down'. And I says well, they spent nearly €300,000 on a football pitch

which they're quite happy to pull out, which has never been used, right. They only built it but they're quite happy to pull that down, right, and waste that money. They're quite happy to build a playground and then pull it up out of the ground and shift it to another spot. But yet they won't secure tenants. So what does that tell you, you know? And...you're not talking massive amounts of money. The amount of money that they've wasted in St. Michael's Estate over the last two years, they could have housed people in hotels while they were building!...So, they can't turn around and say 'Oh, the wastage of money and cutbacks and shortage of money...' because it doesn't apply right across the board. You can see where it differs, when it suits them" (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

Plans for Demolition

Since 1998, when the decision to demolish the flats was made, Dublin City Council has put forward various plans for the regeneration of St. Michael's Estate. However, the future of the estate remains uncertain and only limited developments have been undertaken to date. The first plan was put forward in 1999 by Dublin City Council but this coincided with a prominent local football club trying to acquire the site. Following intensive lobbying to ensure the site was used for social housing, the city councillors rejected the football club's proposals and voted for the land in St. Michael's Estate to be used for housing provision. In December 2000, Dublin City Council held a meeting with the residents, regarding the regeneration of the eleven-acre site. It was agreed that redevelopment would proceed in three phases.

Phase 1: Emmet Crescent and Bulfin Court

The first phase of the regeneration of St. Michael's Estate was completed in April 2003 on nearby sites which had been acquired for this purpose in 1999. It comprised fifty houses and apartments on Emmet Crescent and fifty-one dwellings for senior citizens on Bulfin Court. These developments de-tenanted four blocks for demolition (St. Michael's Estate Regeneration Team, 2004).

Community Participation in Phase 1

The residents of St. Michael's Estate did participate to some extent in the planning of this first phase of the redevelopment. A Project Team was established and the community successfully lobbied for community representation on it, eventually securing two places:

"Even in Phase 1, a lot of learning happened as a result of being involved in the process...the Council set up a project team and the project team...operated within Dublin City Council. And the project team was made up of the Area Manager, responsible for setting up the project here, I think at the time there was a planner, an engineer, allocations personnel, maybe the architect...So, they were kind of highly professional people and there was nobody from the community on that. So, the community here lobbied. They were saying that...there should be two places on that." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

Through the St. Michael's Estate Task Force and the Project Team, the community managed to have considerable input into the design of Emmet Crescent and Bulfin Court:

"...there was a site purchased to build a senior citizens' complex and there was another site purchased to build...a 51 housing scheme and that was Phase 1. And that has happened and people have been involved in that. Local people, the Blocks Committee, have been involved, in the manner that they were represented at the Task Force and they were giving views about accommodation sizes, about what supports people should get to move in Phase 1, what the buildings should look like and that kind of thing." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

Barriers to Community Participation in Phase 1

However, the tenants of St. Michael's Estate did experience difficulties in trying to participate in the planning process. The rest of the Project Team did not seem to seem to make any allowances for their lack of expertise and experience in architecture and planning. Although the community was represented at the table, the representatives found the meetings

intimidating and their ability to participate fully in the decision-making process was somewhat limited:

"...when the local person went on it, they found a lot of it was over their heads! The meetings, number one, took place in the Civic Offices and then they had these professional people at it who were talking and then they had the language. And the way the meetings were conducted were very high-filutin and very over the person's head. So, that person brought that feedback back to the Blocks Committee and said...'I need a bit of a dig out. I find that a bit tough-going, I probably need a bit of a dig-out here'. So, there was a...lobbying of the Task Force, that then a second place would be opened up. So, the support worker...was allowed a place to go and support the local rep. And that began to move it on because the two heads, they were able to begin to analyse some of it together. So, that was...learning. But then, they kind of began to develop plans and stuff like that...A lot of it went ahead...without the two people being able to follow it enough because they didn't really have the resources, because they didn't really know the planning, the architectural implications of new plans and stuff like that. So, Phase 1...while people had a good, a reasonable input into - No! I'm not going to say reasonable! They had an input into it but it wouldn't have been adequate enough, really, to fully be able to follow every kind of detail of what was being planned." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

Described as tokenistic, consultation with the senior citizens regarding the design of their future homes was also criticised. The housing designs and layouts were presented to the residents at an open meeting, complete with a scale model. However, these designs were largely finalised, severely limiting opportunities for meaningful community input:

"The Blocks Committee would have said 'You need to go to the people who are going to be moving to the scene and show them...what the intentions are'. So, they would have come out with a scale model of it. It was very well worked up...Even if you didn't like something, you really couldn't change it at that stage. It was quite worked up because the scale model was developed and the architect was decided...So really, you couldn't change an awful lot...with the senior citizens' accommodation, they were bottom fly roofs...And I remember we got somebody in at that time from the senior citizens parliament down to...say 'Look, this is the kind of accommodation proposed for senior citizens' groupings. From your experience of working with senior citizens, what do you think?' And he had some observations to make but at that stage...it was too late because you couldn't change it. The contractors, obviously, were hired to do the schemes. They were given the design plans, the architects were hired, so the wheels were very much in motion. We really had no real chance of changing that...What I'm saying, we...got involved too late, we weren't allowed in" (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

The lack of technical advice from an independent architect was highlighted as a barrier to effective participation during the planning of the first phase of redevelopment. Several serious problems emerged following completion, which the community had not detected at the planning stage. Some houses did not meet the minimum space standards specified in the DOELG guidelines, all of the larger houses for bigger families were clustered together in one part of the estate and no children's play area was provided:

"Another very clear example...of the learning for Phase 1, and maybe the learning of not having the resources to properly follow it all and maybe really give an input was there was one...scheme built up there called Golden Bridge...It was a 51-unit site and there were...sixteen two-bedroom houses built and they were built under the minimum guidelines, the DOE's own minimum guide...So, that meant that they were smaller than should have been for a two-bedroom house so very little storage in the house. So like, nobody would have known that without having architectural expertise. And...the local person on that project team and the support worker...they weren't skilled enough to be able to pick that up. They wouldn't have been aware of that. So...we missed out on some of that, being able to...catch some of that because of not having the expertise. So when Phase 2 came, to begin to understand some of the plans for Phase 2, we got an architect. We got money from the Canals Partnership Company, to get an architect to help us. We said 'God, maybe we needed that'

because we'd found out that another area down the road had gone that similar way and that they were better equipped to participate. So, we decided to get an architect. But what we did was, we got the architect to have a look at the Golden Bridge site...and she came back with the shock. She said 'Do you realise, of that scheme up there, there's sixteen two-bedroom houses built under the standard, under the sizes?' And she was saying 'They're not suitable for families'. She was recommending to us that they weren't suitable for family living. So, we were able to use that information...when it came to allocating them..." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

"We then got the architect in and said 'Will you have a look at the plans? Will you have a look at how Golden Bridge was designed?'...and she gave us a bit of feedback. So, armed with that information, we were better able to say, when it came to allocations, 'We want to have a say in allocations' and we also said 'We are recommending that the sixteen two-bedroom houses are not allocated to families because they are not long term living. People wouldn't be able to live in them long term because they'll be cluttered, they wouldn't have enough storage space and they wouldn't have enough living space'. So, we fought and fought and fought and we won that battle. But, if we didn't know that information, they would have been allocated... They put in either a two-person household or single people." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

Formulation of a Masterplan for Phases 2 and 3

In February 2001, a new group was established, the Regeneration Team, which comprised representatives of local voluntary and community groups. Its role was to support and advise the Blocks Committee during the negotiations between the community and Dublin City Council:

"...there was another group set up to support the Blocks Committee, they were called the Regeneration Team. And really what they are is, they're the Blocks Committee's advisors, right? So...the Blocks Committee were saying 'This is getting too big, almost. We need somebody else to help us in all the negotiations'...Who's on the Regeneration Team is some of the Blocks Committee members themselves...the Family Resource Centre were on it and then we also have some of the key community and voluntary projects in the area on a team. So, it's like an advisory to the Blocks Committee, to help them in their quest to get a good deal..." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

In June 2001, Dublin City Council launched a plan entitled *St. Michael's Moving Ahead*, outlining its vision for the future of the estate. This Masterplan detailed the second and third phases of the redevelopment of the eleven-acre site, which would take place over a period of five to seven years. It was envisaged that phase two would comprise the development of two distinct housing schemes (A and B), a ten-unit sheltered housing complex and facilities for the family resource centre, a crèche and after-school care. Phase three would comprise two further housing schemes (C and D) and civic, community and health facilities at the front of the site, on Emmet Road. Designed by four different architectural practices, the four housing schemes were intended to be distinct from one another but sympathetic in design (St. Michael's Estate Regeneration Team, 2004). In common with the plans for the first phase of the regeneration, the original *St. Michael's Moving Ahead* document lacked any meaningful community input and was presented to the community as a *fait accompli*:

"'Moving Ahead' was the actual document, that contained the plan, the whole framework plan, laying out of all the different guidelines as to the social impacts, the various different infrastructure, all the different social elements, the economic elements, all the various different bits and pieces that were going to make this whole new community and regenerate the community. We had [named individual, City Manager], we had [named individual, Assitant City Manager], they were all singing from the rooftops that this was a great plan and, you know, gold standard housing and, you know, they were really, really promoting it hard...The consultation process only actually started after that, when we started clawing it back...They put it out there and said 'There you go!' and we said 'Well, no! Not really!'" (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

Tenants' Reactions to the Masterplan for Phases 2 and 3

The tenants' reactions to the *St. Michael's Moving Ahead* plan were mixed. Progress towards the regeneration of the estate was broadly welcomed. However, they had envisaged the replacement of the blocks of flats with traditional houses with front and back gardens, along similar lines to Phase 1. To the dismay of the tenants, Scheme B was the only housing scheme in the plan that included houses, while the remainder comprised relatively high-rise apartments and duplexes:

"...Scheme B definitely got thumbs up because it was nice, it was secure, it was all houses, there were decent sized back gardens and there was a big green out the front." (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

"There were a lot of issues because when they came up with the plan in 2001, they came out with a plan and they had a big kind of showpiece of their set of ideas. Say a week after they launched that, they had models of units, they had drawings up on the wall and they had all that...The Council organised this now, as a follow-up...and they invited over all the residents. Now, the residents were appalled because there was nothing on offer. There were no real houses on offer. A lot of the units were duplex units, which is kind of a two-storey...unit, with a unit overhead. It's like a three-storey...configuration, with...two units in the one. Now remember, people have lived this way, with people up and under them. And in a way, when they were opting for a change, they actually wanted to have a stand-alone unit." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

It was felt that Dublin City Council had reneged on its promises regarding building heights and residential densities, as the tenants' agreement to the demolition of the flats was based on the premise that they would be replaced by houses rather than more 'high-rise', high-density residential developments:

"...[Named individual, Assistant City Manager] made commitments that 'Oh no, everyone will have a house'. But their version of a house is a duplex. That's not a house because you're still going to have someone either living over you or under you. And that's what people want to get away from, that sense of claustrophobia with people all around you type of thing...Like, they're not offering any choice." (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

"...people were saying 'We don't want those duplexes' because it was a new idea. They never knew duplexes existed...The Council organised trips for them to go and see duplexes in town but people still said 'I don't really want them'...People didn't want them at all and they told us that they didn't want them...we [the Blocks Committee] were getting feedback because we had our own public meetings and our own check-in people. We said 'We don't want duplexes. That's not a good thing on the table. We didn't ask for that. We didn't ask to demolish the flats to get duplexes and to have somebody living over us again. We don't want that.'" (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

"The duplex was the biggest thing...a duplex was something really new to them and it took them a while to figure out what an actual duplex was and how it actually worked and when they realised what it was, they thought 'Well, I'm not going to live in that...I may as well just stay here so because I'm going to have someone living over me or someone living under me or whatever.'" (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

"...Scheme D then again was another problem because this was the private part of it and there was a lot of high-rise there. And like even the community next to us, Bulfin, they had a major problem with it because of the heights. Because they thought well...when you demolish St. Michael's Estate and you build houses. Because this is what everyone signed up to and it kept changing and changing and changing. And then the cost factor came in. The cost factor was a case of 'Well, you know, if we don't do it this way, we won't have enough money to actually do it.'" (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

The issues of tenure and 'social mix' proved equally contentious. The community felt that far too high a proportion of the proposed development was given over to private or affordable

housing, particularly in the context of the unprecedented demand for social housing in Dublin. It was only proposed that enough social-rented housing be provided to house the few remaining tenants.

Finally, Dublin City Council's failure to draw on the community's local knowledge in the formulation of the original *St. Michael's Moving Ahead* plan was apparent from several small but potentially significant design faults identified by the tenants:

"Scheme A, people weren't too keen on it because they were very contemporary designed houses, very modern, very townscape type housing, you know. And they had a lot of different curves on them and that so they were very different to what people had seen. But there was lots of little things like there were open-ended walls on it, which meant you could really, from the street, you could jump over a wall and be in someone's back garden, you know. And they were very small walls, you know. So, there was lots of issues like that, there was lots of little niggly things like that, that had to be sorted out." (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

In February 2002, the Blocks Committee and the Regeneration Team launched a document outlining the community's own vision for the future of St. Michael's Estate entitled *Past, Present Future* (St. Michael's Regeneration Team, 2004).

Community Participation in Revising the Masterplan for Phases 2 and 3

The launch of the *St. Michael's Moving Ahead* plan in June 2001 marked the beginning of a lengthy consultation and negotiation process between the residents of St. Michael's and neighbouring estates and Dublin City Council, which was overseen by the St. Michael's Estate Task Force:

"From 2001 to February 2003 a lengthy process was set up to get a plan which match both Dublin City Council's vision, the community needs and that of their surrounding neighbours, particularly residents from Bulfin Estate." (St. Michael's Estate Regeneration Team, 2004)

Initially, the Task Force commissioned research into the tenants' views on the City Council's masterplan. This highlighted the tenants' concerns, with the lack of houses with gardens emerging as a key issue:

"...they [the Regeneration Team] really pushed the Task Force that there be an independent consultation conducted on this plan...So, that happened in November 2001. The consultation process was commissioned by the St. Michael's Estate Task Force...The aim of this was to get local people's views on...the new plan put on the table...We presented the findings back to the Task Force because remember, all the time the St. Michael's Task Force was kind of the monitoring body, it was the only show in town where ideas were put forward and back and where we could sit with the Council. So, the outcome of that consultation was that people wanted houses with front and back gardens. They wanted facilities...and they liked other things that were on the table but...one thing that they didn't like was that it didn't contain any houses. Well, it did!...one scheme contained [houses], but it was a small scheme." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

Two sub-groups of the St. Michael's Estate Task Force were established, to facilitate community participation in substantial revisions to the plan. Both included the Dublin City Council architects overseeing the consultation process and were chaired by the chairperson of the St. Michael's Estate Task Force. The first sub-group negotiated around the broad issues of building heights, residential densities, the tenure breakdown and amenities, while the second sub-group focused on detailed design issues:

"...when they launched St. Michael's Moving Ahead, they launched this amid loads of publicity in 2001. They had a big fanfare to launch it...following this glossy booklet kind of thing, they came out then with a plan...they came out with a set of ideas on a page, looking at schemes and stuff like that...Over a two-year period, that piece of paper with the map and the

whole designs was worked up very much intensely over a two-year period...via the Task Force. And there was two...sub-groups set up for the Task Force...There was one looking at...broad strokes of the plan and coming to agreements about the broad strokes of the plan, maybe the numbers, the size of the schemes, those kind of broad agreements. And then there was a more detailed sub-group set up after that, looking at real detail of what the houses should be, the quality, the type of materials, what doors, what units should they have...that level, they got into real detail.” (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

A good working relationship gradually developed between Dublin City Council and the community, although it did take some time to overcome initial suspicion and distrust:

“...there was a lot of to-ing and fro-ing and there was a lot of mistrust. Like, it took a long, long time to actually get to a stage where we all trusted each other, where City Council trusted us and we trusted them. And we actually had a good working relationship for a certain time.” (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

Barriers to Participating in the Revision of the Masterplan

Despite this good working relationship, the residents of St. Michael's and neighbouring estates experienced several barriers to participating fully in the revision of the masterplan. The community felt that some of the architects from the four firms commissioned by Dublin City Council to design the four residential schemes were arrogant and not community-friendly:

“...the first meeting that we had with [named architectural practice]...they seemed actually in shock that we had an opinion about it, to be honest with you...on the first plan. Because...the first thing we got from them was the amount of awards that they've won. That was the first that they introduced us with. And the fact that we questioned their designs, they were taken aback by that...and it was a real case of 'Well...who are you?'... 'We're the people that have to live in those places that your great architects have great, grand designs about...and the practicalities of your great designs are not always great'...Perception, I think, is everything...They've put [named architectural practice] up on a pedestal and because they've won European awards for Ballymun and that...they're the Architects that City Council seem to invest a lot in” (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

However, the first phase of the regeneration of St. Michael's Estate had been a learning experience for the tenants. In order to enable fuller participation in the design of the next phase, the services of an independent architect were requested. Dublin City Council eventually agreed to provide resources for this purpose although it was initially reluctant, on the grounds that its own architects were available to the community. The community found the advice of an independent architect over the two-year period enormously beneficial in understanding Dublin City Council's proposals and formulating 'a more informed response':

“...the learning from Phase 1 was that we didn't actually have the expertise to properly, adequately participate in...making any real decisions because we just had no architectural support to understand what was being put on the table...So, when they came on the table with any plan then for Phase 2, we were asking them at that stage 'Can we have the resources of an architect? Can you pay for them? Because if you're asking us to get involved, come on board with you, will you resource us with the services of an independent architect?' But, they would say to us 'But, we have our own two architects. They'll work with you'. We were saying 'No! Thanks a lot but we need somebody that's not won over by your plans. We need somebody independently looking at these, that will actually help us understand what you are putting forward and help us come back with a more informed response.” (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

“We pushed at the Task Force...that 'We will only work in these sub-groups if we get the resources of an architect'. And at the time, the [DCC Official] who was involved did want to deliver on a regeneration plan so she...worked hard to get us resources. So, she got our group, the...St. Michael's Estate Blocks Committee, she got our group the funding for an architect. And she also got funding for the neighbouring community, for them to understand

the implications of any plan for here. So...we're all armed and able to come back with responses. So, it moved the thing on..." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

"...what we were able to do within that two-year period, we were able to get the services of the architect, their independent architect, and she worked with the local people. She came out and had a number of meetings with local people and presented the plan in very lay-person terms and then the local people said 'I like this and I like that' and 'That won't work. That structure won't work and this one will'. So, there was really...good participation like and she was able to meet them at their own level, talk at their own level, getting across what was being presented in a very...complex way. And say...for instance, even in terms of distances, that 'That building is that far away and...that's the amount of private space you would have'. That level of detail...following that then, we would go back to say the Task Force and say to the Task Force, in relation to say scheme A on the plan that 'The local people have said that...this is what they're in favour of, this is what they'd like more progress on and this is what they'd like you to let go of.'" (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

"...we weren't in a position to, you know, to do anything without that type of help. It was impossible! Because the bit for us was the suggestions that our consultant architect came up with and putting our ideas into a proper format and taking them away and coming up with them and rationalising them. And even to a certain extent, telling us 'Well, no. You can't actually do that! You can't do it that way. It doesn't work that way. You have to do it this way or you have to...'...So, we knew exactly what we were going in with and we were armed with the information and we were confident enough that the information that we had was right and it was workable." (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

While the participation process was lengthy, the community still found it difficult to meet the deadlines set by Dublin City Council. Community representatives did not have a mandate to make major decisions on behalf of the residents. Major proposals had to be considered by the tenants and decided democratically, which was time-consuming. The community representatives felt that city council officials did not understand the nature of meaningful community consultation as they always felt under pressure to meet deadlines which they felt were unreasonable:

"It took two years but...we were always running after the Council's deadlines. The Council were always in a hurry and the Council had huge frustrations, I think, with how long it was taking us to keep up with the process. Simply because we had the checking back all the time...Like, the Blocks Committee were on the Task Force and ideas would be presented to them. The Blocks Committee had to come back, digest them and have discussions. But then, if there was any big subsequent...decision to be made...they had to have a public meeting...That's what was the delay." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

"...if a new set of ideas was proposed or a...new radical change - and I'll give you one example of that. It was in the phase 2 of the plan, there was...a big open park at the front, well nearer the front. And the Council came back saying, before they finalised the scheme, and said 'What if we reduced the size of that open park and built another few houses nearer. Then we'd get in more numbers. How do you think people would feel?'...That might be proposed, say, at the Task Force. Now, they'd look at the local people and say 'What do you think?' Now, the local people themselves began to say 'We can't take on - we can't agree to this here. Like, you're taking some of the park. So, we have to go back'...And the Council used to find that hugely frustrating that people couldn't just kind of go 'Yeah, ok!'...There was always that checking back, you had to go back because the people that were fronting by the local area and myself had a huge responsibility to make sure that what we were negotiating was what people all the time were asking us to get, do you know what I mean? But, I think that that slowed up things." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

"...I think that, if you are to really do community development work and do it right, it's a slower process, you know...You might organise a meeting to check out with people 'Look, this is a new idea that's come on the table'. And suppose that nobody turns up on a particular night, you have to go and do it again. To try and find another way of getting people out so you can make sure that people are aware of any proposed change and that they're satisfied with it."

And then you go back there and say...But the Council, all the time I felt that we were rushing to their deadlines. But I know they would argue on the other side that consultation takes a huge amount of time...the type of consultation that we would consider meaningful consultation, the Council has great difficulties with that because they find that slows the whole thing up. They were always rushing to deadlines of trying to get the planning by this date, trying to get the planning by that date. And I know even now, the Council will probably look to us and say we held up, we slowed a lot down, things would've moved on much faster.” (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

Furthermore, key deadlines often fell around holiday times. At best, this is indicative of a lack of commitment to meaningful community participation. At worst, it could be interpreted as deliberately minimising opportunities for participation by pushing key decisions through at times when the community was least organised:

“I find in my own experience of working here...key decisions around different things were always coming near the holiday time...So, people had to sign-off on the plan for phase 2 in August...Like, it was always that. I was on holidays. I had to come back up and attend a public meeting...and get people out. And then also, another key time, when people had to make a key decision about stuff...was December...So, it was at times when people are less organised and...people's minds are on something else...So, there was key decisions, I think, at times were always being asked by the Council for people to make at times where there was less likely to be people in a position to participate. Now, at Christmas, people are so focused, you won't get people from the start of December to the end of...January to focus on plans...I don't know, if that's deliberate or what's the craic that's going on there?” (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

In defence of Dublin City Council, it must be noted that each of the four schemes was designed by a different architectural practice, making revisions to the plans very difficult to co-ordinate:

“There was four sections to it, four schemes, scheme A, B, C, and D. And each scheme was designed by a different architect, which must have caused an absolute nightmare for the two years that we had their heads wrecked! It must have because, if you changed one part, it had repercussions then on the rest of the plan. But they were different architects they were dealing with so you can imagine the turmoil it must have caused, trying to get it all sorted out. Which probably led them to the conclusion that ‘We need to go back to the drawing board on this because this is just all over the place now’. And one of the architectural companies was English. So, they were having to bring them over from London any time stuff was going on...It must have been a nightmare.” (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

Notwithstanding these difficulties, a masterplan for the regeneration of St. Michael's Estate was finally agreed in August 2002. A product of intensive negotiations between Dublin City Council, the tenants and residents of neighbouring estates over a two-year period, the agreed plan comprised 320 dwellings, a mixture of houses, duplex apartments and apartments, between two and five storeys high. The tenure structure comprised 170 public-rented, eighty affordable and seventy private dwellings. Despite the time commitment and occasional frustrations associated with the participation process, most tenants felt that fair compromises had been reached and were satisfied with the final outcome:

“Local tenants and neighbouring residents gave voluntarily their time over this lengthy process. Many meetings were very difficult and during negotiations compromises had to be made on all sides. However...all involved were happy that all the hard had finally paid off in that the plan was finalised and was ready to go through the planning system. While the process was hard and frustrating at times those who were involved gained respect for each other and trust had been built up. All who participated felt that this plan was the best plan for the people of St. Michael's Estate as it was imaginative, forward-thinking and visionary.” (St. Michael's Estate Regeneration Team, 2004, 9)

“...over a two-year period, there was a good, intensive process where people got resourced by the services of an architect and they were able to participate much, much more greater than they were in phase 1 because we learned lessons in phase 1. And then there was a plan drawn up which people were happy with.” (Regeneration worker, St. Michael’s Estate)

“...it took a while to break it all down...between the whole lot of us to come up with something that we all actually agreed with. And there was a lot of compromise. Like, I mean...they wanted to build 320. When [named individual, Area Manager] came to the table, what she said was ‘Ok, here will be the guiding principles of the plan, that there has to be 320 units, there has to be I think it was two crèches...’ She outlined the various pieces that...just were not changeable...We wanted all houses. They said ‘No! It has to be a mixture of apartments as well, to make up the numbers’. So, we gave them a lot of it...We gave up a lot of the plan, to make the elements that...applied to St. Michael’s Estate, to make them work. So, we gave on a lot of stuff. And I think we came up with a really good plan at the end of it. Connolly Avenue agreed...the whole of Inchicore was behind this plan, even though it didn’t seem like it. But, all the various different representative bodies and that, they had gone back and checked with their organisations and...the people who had come to the process, who had come forward. And, you know, the plan went in pre-approved. The only thing it needed was actual funding.” (Former resident & activist, St. Michael’s Estate).

Negotiated Plan Rejected

Following the conclusion of negotiations with the community in August 2002, Dublin City Council costed the agreed masterplan and submitted an Environmental Impact Statement to the Department of the Environment and Local Government for approval in January 2003. It was expected that planning permission would be sought in summer 2003. However, the community learned in September 2003 that the masterplan had been rejected by the Department of the Environment and Local Government in August, on the grounds that it was too expensive. It was recommended that ‘alternative means’, such as a public private partnership, should be examined (St. Michael’s Estate Regeneration Team, 2004).

“...a plan was...drawn up and...we thought then that it was finished and all the work had been done on it. And we were told by Dublin City Council, through the Task Force again, that that it was going through the system, that the An Bord Pleanála or the Department of the Environment would check it for costings, blah, blah, blah. And then we thought...‘Great! Now we can focus our energies on the social regeneration side of it’...Only then to be told last September that actually that plan was rejected. The Department of the Environment had actually sent back an instruction to...Dublin Council to say ‘We haven’t got the money to deliver on this scheme. We now instruct you to explore the possibility of delivering that scheme under a new route, i.e. the public-private partnership.’” (Regeneration worker, St. Michael’s Estate)

The residents of St. Michael’s Estate were shocked at this outcome. They had not detected any warning signals that the funding required to implement the plan might not be forthcoming:

“...we went in and we were all quite cheery people at that stage of the game...we were expecting a report that the plan has gone in and we’re just waiting for the planning application to be approved on it. And we gave our little spiel at the start of the meeting. The chairperson opened the meeting, we gave our little spiel. And then [named individual], who was the new IAP Project Manager...informed us that the Department of the Environment were not going to fund the plan and it was essentially scrapped. And this was at the first meeting to set up the board that was going to implement this plan. So, we just walked. We just felt “Well ok...there’s no point in having this meeting...We were in shock for a while, I have to say now, in deep shock because we just couldn’t believe it. We argued, we sought information, we tried to have...an understanding of what was actually happening here.” (Former resident & activist, St. Michael’s Estate)

“...what we couldn’t understand was that well, what they’re actually outlining is stuff that we marked like six months ago and we were told ‘Oh no, that’s fine’. Because like with the

duplex, they put the apartment upstairs because they have their own door access policy...It meant that the apartment has to have a door on street level...which meant you have to create a staircase up to the apartment. Which meant that the plot size of the house had to increase so's that the staircase didn't cut into the space of the plot for the house. And this applied to every unit then, which meant the plots were getting bigger and bigger. And like you know, the Department of the Environment picked up on that as being...'They're too big.' (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

Participating in the revision of the plan had fostered a strong sense of community ownership and the realisation that it was not going to be implemented was enormously disappointing for the residents of St Michael's Estate. The tenants were continuing to live under very difficult conditions and had been very much looking forward to the completion of their new homes:

"...my wife, she was devastated, I have to say now, she was really devastated. Because it took her a long time to actually get to grips with Inchicore because she wasn't from there, she didn't really know anyone there. And so...it took her a long time to get to grips with it but she had finally seen...the light at the end of the tunnel and she was saying 'Well, you know, a house' and she started mixing with people up there and that...And then...to have it all wrenched away from you like that and the manner it was done. It's really terrible. And...to me it just proves the fact that they don't give a fuck. They really don't. They couldn't care less about people." (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

Discarding the agreed plan had a very demoralising effect on the tenants, many of whom had invested a lot of time and effort in the lengthy participation process:

"...that shattered everybody because people did participate...They participated at meetings, many local people gave voluntarily of their own time to attend meetings and we got money for architects and whatever. And then people encouraged people almost to stay with it, you know 'Come to meetings, stay with it, don't pull out. Don't leave the area, there's something really good coming on-stream'...all that kind of build-up...as you can see the sites are empty now...That plan really, in theory, should have been starting...We should be looking at a contractor now beginning to develop one of those schemes there, if it had worked out. But that was rejected. So, basically...we had to start all over again..." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

Community workers and leaders found that they had lost credibility within the community. They anticipated difficulties in persuading the community to re-engage with Dublin City Council, to try to influence the content of subsequent plans for the area:

"...the consequence of that plan being rejected was, it demoralised the community. People lost a bit of faith in the community leaders and ourselves, in terms of us being able to deliver on anything...They were saying 'But you told us, like, what was going on? What were all those meetings about? We had architects! What's after going on?'...And we lost a bit of credibility as well...It demoralised us as workers. I was totally demoralised because I had journeyed with people and I had asked people also to trust us and to stay with us and to come to meetings and to believe in a system." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

"It's really, really annoying, when you're trying to convince people...we had to go back to the residents in the flats and say 'Well, you know'. And this was after we'd been building them up and building them up and building them up and convincing them to stay and convincing them that this was the best opportunity for a good house, a good, high quality house in a good community, that had resources, that had vision and that wanted to see change. And you know, people are laughing at us now! They must be! They must be sitting back, thinking we're a right shower of gobshites, you know. And it's got really, really cynical." (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

"That's the way St. Michael's Estate is at the moment. That's why it's down to like fifty-odd residents at the moment. Because there's a complete apathy to belief in 'This will actually be done the way we want it done'. That you actually will get your house or you will get your

apartment or whatever the case may be. They don't believe it. They don't believe participating does any good whatsoever...because they've seen us working for two years, just to have the plan thrown in the bin, you know. And like, it's taken a while to convince people not to just throw in the towel yet, you know. And I'm not even certain that we have convinced people. I think we've probably got a bit of a stay of execution more so than anything else.” (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

In addition to disappointment and loss of credibility, the tenants were very angry. With the benefit of hindsight, it was felt that a public-private partnership had long been planned for St. Michael's Estate but it had not been politically opportune to announce this while negotiations were continuing:

“...the whole PPP thing came about long before it was ever put out there. I mean, it was marked for PPP I'd say early last year, maybe even late the year before that, it was marked. And it was just sitting there, it was prime for the picking. But, because the negotiations were ongoing...they wouldn't have got away with pulling it there and then. They wouldn't have got away with saying 'Well look, no, we can't do it this way, we're doing it a different way'. They wouldn't have got away with it because everything would have went up in the air then because Fatima was still on the way, O'Devaney they'd only started getting into that...There was a lot going on in the city...That would have been the catalyst that would have started something bigger that would have collapsed in on top of them. So they thought 'No, we'll sit on this and we'll say nothing.'

“...And at the back of it all, [named individual, Area Manager] was always saying to us 'Oh, yous need to move on this now, yous need to move on this now'. Like, we believe now that there was an undercurrent there. That St. Michael's plan or St. Michael's Estate was just sitting there waiting for PPPs to come along and it was just ripe for the picking. Because the difference, like, with Fatima and ourselves was that Fatima set up their board first. They got their board set up first. They had a framework plan or whatever but they done it very, very different. They done a framework plan but they set up the board before they done anything else, before they made any agreements... And once they had that board set up, there was a legal structure in place, there were legal obligations that had to be upheld. City Council had no outs.”

“... [Named individual, Area Manager] may not have been able to say anything and she definitely did try to drop hints because she kept saying all along 'Oh, we need to move on this quickly, we need to move on this quickly. We need to get this done and get it signed and get the board set up'. And she was really, really, you know, pushing it and pushing it and pushing it. And it was only afterwards, that when you sit back and think about it...she must have known...And maybe she did have to bite her lip. Maybe she did actually want to tell us...The change in attitude from her was really dramatic in the last part of the negotiations because she was giving a lot more...She was giving up money, like, for playgrounds and she was giving up money for this, that and the other, paying bills for architects and stuff like that. She had actually become quite community friendly, whereas she had been really, really hands-off before that and was very difficult to deal with.” (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

Indeed, correspondence emerged providing confirmation that public-private partnerships had been discussed before, as an option for regenerating run-down social housing estates in Dublin City:

“...it was within the letter, the Department of the Environment were telling City Council that it would be best to go with a PPP option. But it had alluded to the fact that they had had conversations about this before. So, that was the first indication that we got that this wasn't just something that happened yesterday. And...as the story unfolded and as we found out other things, we found out then that there was correspondence linking plans with PPPs going back two years prior to that. Now and you know, not necessarily St. Michael's Estate, but that they were just talking generally about it. So, it was definitely there. And as it turns out, our conclusion was that St. Michael's Estate was just sitting there, ripe for a PPP. There was no protection on it, there was nothing to prevent them doing whatever the hell they wanted to do with it.” (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

As a consequence of Dublin City Council's perceived lack of honesty, the trust which had been painstakingly built-up between the community and the local authority was shattered:

"...what really annoyed me was the fact that 'Ah well, the Department of the Environment won't give us the money for it. We want to do it! We think it's a great plan but they won't give us the money for it. So, we have to come up with another way'. But they already knew. The PPP was already there before that, you know. So, they were lies." (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

Formulation of a New Draft Framework Plan

Dublin City Council formulated a new draft framework plan for a public-private partnership, which was launched in June 2004. However, no attempt was made to re-embark on negotiations with the community regarding this latest plan for the redevelopment of St. Michael's Estate, as the City Council seemed to be anxious to avoid the delays experienced in formulating the previous plan:

"...we've been told quite clearly 'We're not going down the road, the way we did with the other plan because we lost a lot of time'. They said 'That time takes too much time'. So, I don't think that they really know what community participation means, in my view, because it does take time if you want to bring the community along with you. Genuinely, it takes time to work on that, get people out, get resources. And they'd be telling us...'Look, we're not going down the road of consultation and all that level of meetings because it took too long, right? We want to deliver a plan quicker than that'." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

During the process of negotiation and bargaining that took place in order to reach agreement on the previous masterplan, the community had begun to believe that Dublin City Council was genuinely becoming more open to facilitating meaningful community participation in decision-making. However, the tenants found it difficult to obtain even basic information regarding the content of the subsequent draft framework plan, prior to it being launched as a *fait accompli*. The community was not afforded any opportunities to participate in the formulation of this latest plan:

"...the Council...have actually gone back in on themselves and have gone the opposite way now. They've developed another...draft framework plan but they very much have developed it overnight in isolation with the community. So, the participation from the community in their new ideas was absolutely minimal. It's gone back to the old ways of doing things." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

"We'd been told...a new framework plan has been designed and drawn up...and we were trying to say at the Task Force 'What's it like? What's coming?' but we were getting nothing...We were kept very much out of it. And they came out with their new plan then in September, a new draft framework plan, which was totally radical, totally different from the one that they agreed previously, which everyone was in favour of." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

"...when the last framework plan came in, there was no consultation at all, although we were all sitting on the Task Force. Dublin City Council said that they would take on board all the issues that we had raised before that. When the plan came out, it was just blocks upon blocks of eight-storey, seven-storey and six-storey. No social housing, as in houses, not duplex flats or anything like that. Just all apartments, which is totally against the wishes of the people living all in Michael's Estate and around here. We've had enough of building of skyscrapers that don't work. So, there was huge hostility about that." (Councillor A)

Indeed, the tenants of St. Michael's Estate reported two entirely different experiences of community participation in planning for the regeneration of this run-down flats complex. With regard to the formulation of the latest draft framework plan, they found officials far less co-operative and helpful and felt that they were not taking the community's views into account:

"I've had two different types of experiences...when we were designing the plan for this. Like, on the design team, I met the City Council architects a number of times and...I knew them quite well through it. And in between meetings, I could ring them up and say 'You agreed to send out a set of plans, I have difficulties with them'. They were very co-operative, I have to say, I was able to access them because we were working together to deliver something...through that process as well, we said to the architects 'We need to meet the architects over the different schemes'. So, they set up those arrangements. So, there was a really good working relationship. But now, that's gone. That experience was positive or whatever. And here we are now, they're working again very differently with us..." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

"I have two sets of experiences in it. I thought at one point when we were working out with the old plan and all that, I genuinely...thought they were taking our views. I felt, and we were made feel, our views were taken...because we really did engage. When you feel you're being taken onboard and your views...that there was a sense of 'Yeah, we can work with these people because they're listening to us'. But remember again, obviously they didn't listen to us because well, when the plan got rejected, well what did that say?" (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

Local Residents' Campaign

It was within this context that the residents of St. Michael's Estate had started to campaign in January 2004 for Dublin City Council to re-engage with the community, with the agreed plan as the starting point for negotiations. The services of a sympathetic PR firm were secured free-of-charge and a logo, representing Dublin City Council's boot trampling on the agreed plan designed. Leaflets were produced and circulated throughout Inchicore and campaigners went door-to-door asking local residents for their support. A petition with over 3,000 signatures was raised and presented to Dublin City Council in September, on the same day as the launch of its new draft framework plan:

"We let people know, in Inchicore, that there was a plan here for that area. It wasn't the first plan in town, it was about the third plan, but here we have a good plan that most people signed up to and that people were happy with...We dropped in leaflets in everybody's door...in Inchicore...So, we dropped in leaflets...to say who we are and what we do, blah, blah, blah and then we said 'We'll be around to look for your support to get the old plan back on the table'. Now, we meant back on the table for future discussion...We knew we wouldn't get it all but we were saying if they were designing another plan, if we had the old one as a basis for negotiation, that's our starting point. So, then we went around...door-to-door and we did...a petition...So, by going door-to-door, people were saying 'What's that all about? Tell me about that plan!'...So, we got over 3,200 signatures of support, mainly from the Inchicore area but there were some, say, community projects that signed their name to the petition as well...And we presented them to [named individual, City Manager] on the 30th, the same day...that the Dublin City Council, came out with their new plan." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

"...the good thing about it, since we started the campaign, the rest of Inchicore has become active, which is really good. Like, we had a public meeting there a few weeks back and 150 people turned up at it from the rest of Inchicore, which is huge. Especially in Inchicore because...Inchicore, it's one of those middle ground areas. It's quite conservative in its thinking but yet it's roots are very, very working class, very, very working class and I think we've managed to tap into it. Like, when we were out doing the petitions and that now, we got...just over 3,000 signatures I think it was. But, we were getting a really, really positive reaction from people on the doors. Like, they were really upset about the fact that the plans had been scrapped. Because a lot of them didn't actually know that the plans were scrapped. A lot of them just thought it was working away in the background and it would be done. And since this plan came out, they really responded heavily...they're looking at the whole of Inchicore being over-developed now. I mean, you've got [named property development company], who's banging up apartment complexes on every little piece of ground in Inchicore that he can find...I mean, there's something in the region of six huge apartment complexes, two or three of which are still under construction. And this is even without the 850 units that

this [St. Michael's Estate regeneration] is going to provide. And without the Eircom grounds down beside Heuston Station...That has been the catalyst that has changed our plan and the whole of Inchicore." (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

Tenants' Reactions to the Draft Framework Plan

The tenants had hoped that the new draft framework plan might include some of the key elements of the rejected Masterplan. However, there was widespread disappointment and anger when the new plan was launched, as it was seen as a total departure from what had previously been agreed:

"...one of the questions I said to them when this new plan was being drafted up behind the scenes...and we were still at meetings and we were saying 'We liked the old plan and we liked it for all this variety of reasons'. And we did think that the new plan would incorporate some of the key stuff. So, obviously they didn't listen to us since. They haven't listened to us since September to now because their plan has come out - just, nobody likes it..."

"...We on the ground would have thought at least they would have actually incorporated some of the key elements of the old plan into the new one..., if anything to satisfy people. But they didn't...the numbers were totally different, the breakdown was totally different, the heights were totally different. And this new plan came back with a huge number of units built on the site, it came back with a whole different breakdown of public / private / affordable and it came back with the heights gone back up again. And, well, the only pluses of the new plan is, it talked about the possibilities of the front being developed. But that was always going happen in the phase 3 of St. Michael's Estate...the process in the design of the new plan was deplorable. People were kept out of it and as a result the new draft framework plan doesn't contain anything that satisfied anybody. So, the St. Michael's Estate residents have rejected it, the majority of the people that have come out to meetings from the wider Inchicore have rejected it." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

Although the local campaign had failed to persuade Dublin City Council to reinstate the agreed Masterplan and re-engage with the community, the residents had still hoped that some of its key points might have been retained. However, even the fact that 3,200 people had signed their petition did not seem to have had any impact on the content of the new plan:

"We thought that when they came out with their new plan that perhaps there'd be some movement of being seen to shift on the new set of ideas that they had on new plan. But they weren't really. They were very, like, saying...they were standing over this new plan, irrespective of us getting that kind of support." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

Again, the issues of building heights, residential densities and tenure mix were contentious:

"Now they've extended it to fourteen acres, whereas the old plan was only looking for twelve. They've 850 of a density, whereas on the other plan there was 320. So, it's gone way up, the numbers are up and it's mostly private. There's something like 700, over 700, private being planned and there's only eighty duplex units planned for the local people...for public. And there's, I don't know, it's something like 200 and something affordable units, but it's...mostly an apartment complex, you know? So, that's why they don't like it...The people in Inchicore are actually saying that...'There's apartments going up all over the area. We need some houses and a community-type set up'. So, it's been rejected by people. Wholeheartedly by the people of St. Michael's Estate, by all the community projects who work...with people from St. Michael's Estate, rejected by the Blocks Committee, rejected by, as I said, the majority of people from the wider Inchicore who came out to meetings." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

"...they've completely gone against the grain of integration, this whole thing about integration...you've even got a buffer space between the private and the public...What they're saying is...and I can understand a certain amount of it, the management of these places is...at the crux of the integration issue. Because if you have ten houses on a street and the first house, house 1 is a tenancy, house 2 is an affordable, house 3 is a private, house 4 is a private, house 5 and so on, the management company can't manage all of those places

exactly the same. There's a different approach that has to be applied because a person who is in a tenancy is most likely paying differential rent, which means that if they can't afford the management fees, then they can't be expected to pay. But, the person two doors down is paying the full management fee...It's purely because they want to bring private management companies in, which is the real problem. They need to claw back from that and come up with a different way of doing it..." (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

Barriers to Community Participation in Revising the Draft Framework Plan

Following the launch of the new plan, Dublin City Council held six public meetings, to explain the new draft framework plan and gather feedback from the community. However, this consultation process was subject to harsh criticism from the community, as it was felt that there was no genuine commitment to facilitating participation:

"Dublin City Council went down and they carried out a consultation process that was deplorable. It wasn't even a consultation process! It was information sessions. They didn't really have any genuine interest about getting people's views because the way they were conducted was appalling...they had a model and...they described the model: 'This is the height and this is this and this is this'. So, they had, kind of, a model on the table and they told people about the model. And then they might have had a drawing. Now...you don't really get it or the implications of it..." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

"I went to all the public meetings. There was a public meeting held locally, there was about 350 people there and there wasn't anybody in the hall agreed with this framework plan. Although Dublin City Council said it was only a framework plan, it was there for negotiation. But, going on what had happened before, we all felt that there was no negotiation here. And if we let this plan go through, we were only giving ourselves a huge headache." (Councillor A)

The only opportunity for the residents of St. Michael's and neighbouring estates to have their voices heard at these information sessions was to fill in a comments card. While some residents found it difficult or intimidating to express themselves in writing, others were too angry to fill in the comments card. Their extensive verbal feedback was not recorded:

"...what they said to people was 'You can fill out a comment sheet at the end'. They had nobody taking minutes or recording any of the verbal feedback that people were giving. And many, many people gave a lot of verbal objections to the plan in a variety of ways, for a variety of reasons. Nothing of that got recorded. Unless you filled out a comment sheet on the way out, none of that was taken."

"...Well, the barriers to the consultation is putting it in writing. And also, if you're angry and you're going into something very, very angry, you have it all spilled out before you. And then that's all you want to do, is just verbalise it, do you know what I mean? And I know, at one of the consultations sessions relating to the new draft framework plan that was put down in June, one woman went in and just gave her views and then walked out. She was so angry, she couldn't even stay anymore. She just went in and said "I reject this plan!" And the residents said '...that incident hasn't got recorded because she didn't fill out a sheet'...There was lots of people said lots of stuff. So, that's a barrier." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

Community representatives highlighted these issues and asked for the adoption of an alternative approach to consulting the tenants but Dublin City Council refused. This was interpreted as arrogance and led the community to question whether even the written comments would be considered properly:

"...they just disengaged the community. They were...doing it their way...When we even challenged them at the Task Force about the way they were conducting the consultation - There was three meetings ran and we were saying '...You're not recording anything that people had said', that 'The only commentary is if the people take the time to fill out a comment sheet'. We said 'We recommend for your next three sessions now, of those six, that maybe you do it another way'. And they listened to people's advice. We were saying 'Some people are not good at writing stuff down. They're not comfortable writing stuff down...'... 'And

they're too angry! They might just "Tsssk"...We recommended at the Task Force...'Listen, would you do it a different way? Would you add a little bit or whatever?'...they argued a bit or whatever but they listened to us and then they said 'No! Sorry, we're going to do it our way'...so, it was that kind of stubborn, arrogant attitude that actually began to drive people to say 'If that's the way it is just about a simple consultation, well what's going to happen with the contents of what they hear? Are they really going to take any of them seriously, if they're really going to do it their own way anyway?'" (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

These concerns seemed well-founded, as even the limited feedback from these information sessions did not seem to be being considered properly by Dublin City Council. The level of community opposition to the new draft framework plan was not reflected by the City Council's reports to the Task Force:

"...we challenged them at the Task Force and say 'We'd like some feedback about how the consultation sessions were going'. They would say that 'Ah well, people don't like this. Overall, people will like the plan'. They weren't really honestly reflective of what was coming up because we had people there! Not that we planted people there but local residents might say 'I'm going to all those meetings' because they were following the process...And they used to come back and say 'Oh my God! The level of opposition at those meetings and the things that people were saying!' To a point where some of the local women were saying to me 'I'm embarrassed for that Area Manager and the amount of flack he has to take!' But then...armed with that information, we'd go to the Task Force, and say 'How's it going? Could you give us a bit of feedback?' They weren't really selling it that way. They had a different slant on it, do you know what I mean? So, there was a bit of panic coming on." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

Further barriers to meaningful community participation were posed by an unrealistic timeframe for consultation, together with setting deadlines during holiday times. These issues had also arisen when the rejected *St. Michael's Moving Ahead* plan was being substantially revised, suggesting that Dublin City Council had failed to learn from this lengthy negotiation process:

"...when they presented their new plan in June, their closing date for consultation was the 21st of August. Now, again, August! So, we fought at the Task Force. We said 'That's unrealistic, given you lodged the plan there in July'...So, we got them to extend that deadline to the middle of October." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

Finally, the community was not nearly as well-resourced to participate in this latest draft framework plan as they had been for the preceding plan. Dublin City Council agreed to fund only four days with an independent architect. Again, it was argued that Dublin City Council's architects would explain the plan:

"...we were looking for resources around consultation and we were looking for a proper consultation on the new framework plan because we felt people should be very much involved in it and find ways of understanding it, in order to be able to properly respond back. We made a presentation on...the way consultation should be taken onboard with this new plan and none of it was taken onboard. None of it! People weren't resourced properly to adequately...give an informed decision to it...What we were given was four days with an architect and we...fought hard to get that. Whereas in the other plan, the other official agreed to a consultation process, agreed that this set of ideas, that there would be consultation and also got more resources for architecture and supports and people were much more involved. This time, there was very little given to the community. The community were very kept outside and look what's happened! The plan has come out, it has no reflection of what people want and...there's been an overall rejection of it." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

"We had our own consultant architect, which meant we normally went to her anyway, to get clarification and stuff. But, I'm not sure if they have actually agreed to pay for a consultant architect this time around. They seem more on the line of 'Well no. No, we're not paying."

We're not doing any of that any more. This is the way it is now. We'll explain it to you."
(Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

Overall the community felt that Dublin City Council was simply going through the motions of consulting with the community and that nothing they said would have any bearing on the content of the final plan:

"...it's highly, highly cynical. Like, if you look at what they're doing at Fatima and the whole publicity drive there and then the attitude in St. Michael's Estate is totally different now. It's hands-off. It's... 'This is the way we're doing it and you either like it or you don't like it. But, irrespective, it's being done that way regardless'. There's absolutely no consultation actually takes place... Well, they inform us of what they're doing but that's about it... and only barely... There's no real sense of participation, there's no sense of belonging or sense of ownership to it at all... Even with [named individual, Assistant City Manager], when he was out with us, promising the sun, moon and stars and... 'Oh, I'll always be available to you' and that type of nonsense... But... they're quite hard in what they're saying, in terms of 'Oh no, this is the way it's going'." (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

Tenants' Reactions to the Consultation Process

Dublin City Council's failure to involve the community in the formulation of the new draft development plan or to engage properly with the community regarding their concerns once it was launched angered the resident of St. Michael's Estate and wider Inchicore. It was widely felt that Dublin City Council had reneged on its agreements:

"They've reneged on the actual original agreement. The principal agreement behind demolishing St. Michael's Estate was to build houses for people and they've reneged on that. Now, the problem with it is, because there is no actual legal documents or legal agreements, they don't have to do anything that we've agreed to at all. They could still go ahead and do what they want. But what does that create?... How do they actually regenerate a community by dealing with them like that?... You don't!" (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

There was a strong feeling of inequity; that St. Michael's Estate was being treated very differently to other flats complexes in Dublin. This was blamed on the loss of community leadership and the weakness of community opposition:

"...they have always dealt with us totally different to everywhere else and maybe it's because they can. Maybe it's because we are so weak on the ground and they know that. That they don't have to appeal to us, whatsoever." (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

The residents reached the conclusion that, although Dublin City Council's language has changed to appear more open to involving communities in making decisions affecting their homes and neighbourhoods, this was never accompanied by a change in practice:

"...they have the language and this is something I always press now. Like, they have the language, right, they know how to talk, they know what to say, they know what words to use. But their practice is no different than what it was twenty years ago. They have different ways of doing it now, that's all. They're a bit more clever, they've learned." (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

"...with all their lingo, like the language that they talk about partnership and integration, like they have the lingo, they know the language but, what they've forgotten about is the things that - The Government has actually signed up to Agenda 21, it has signed up... it is one of the social partners... You look at all the different things that they've signed up to and what they're doing in St. Michael's Estate runs totally opposite to what they've agreed to do. You know like, the whole participation of people, bringing people from disadvantage. They're creating a whole new generation of disadvantage in itself." (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

Dublin City Council's insistence that St. Michael's Estate must be redeveloped by a public-private partnership (PPP) particularly concerned the community, as the City Council was using the viability of a PPP to justify high residential densities and low proportions of social-rented housing. The tenants of St. Michael's Estate could not see the logic behind promoting the type of PPP proposed, as they were seen as an enormous waste of public assets:

"...they call it a public-private partnership but it's not, it's a private development. There's less than 10% is actually coming back to public housing, which is even less than the Part V provides for, on a proper private development. But yet, this is a public-private partnership. Now, it's going to cost €180-odd million but the return on it is colossal. It's really, really colossal. But, what they actually get out of it is nothing by comparison." "...even as PPPs go, it's not a PPP! It's nothing like a PPP. A PPP is more of a half and half thing...The Government put up half, private developers put up half. And then when it's done and dusted, the State take half and the private developer have half...But...the way they're doing it, the way they're proposing is that it's 850 units, the private developer will come in, build all of those units, the City Council will take back eighty public housing units. There'll be something in the region of 220 I think it is or 300 affordable units and this is their selling point... Now, as far as I'm concerned, they're private. They may be designed and targeted towards a specific group of people who are...taking their first step on the property ladder or who can't afford to get a private mortgage, which is fine but they are private units. At the end of the day, they're more private units that they're building. They're not actually public housing units...But, the affordable argument that they're putting up is what's winning them the battle because that's the audience who are up in arms over housing. Young professional people, who can't afford a mortgage who are being crucified in...private renting market or living at home with their parents waiting to find something. And that's the audience that they're targeting now and these are the people...who'll go out and vote. These are the people who are motivated so these are the people who they're appealing to. They're not interested in me and my family or families in St. Michael's Estate and they're not even interested in people who can afford private mortgages because that's not their market."

"...they're talking now that the state is going to generate, between the various different sales of lands and bits and pieces, they're going to generate somewhere in the region of €7 billion over the next few years. I mean, that's massive money! That is absolutely huge. It's alright generating that. What are they actually going to do with it though? That's the thing. Like, is this all going into private developers' pockets? Because at the end of the day, I mean, they don't need brown envelopes any more now, to do their skulduggery and do their behind the door deals now! They've legal structures in place now, where they can do it properly, all above board in white envelopes, where they don't have to hide behind doors any more..."
(Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

Rejection of the Draft Framework Plan by the City Councillors

Having recognised the potential importance of gaining the support of the councillors at an early stage, as the council alone had the power to veto the disposal of the site to a developer, the tenants of St. Michael's Estate had introduced themselves at the first meeting of the new council and kept the councillors informed of developments:

"...we recognised that the councillors could be crucial in the play, you know...So, one of our strategies was, when all the new councillors got elected, they had their first meeting, it was...in June. So, we went into the council chamber and introduced ourselves as from the campaign and we gave all the councillors a pack like this and said 'Congratulations!' We'd a letter and it said 'We're delighted that you got elected and we really are looking forward to working with you in the future'. And we gave each of them a pack the first day they all met...Because we knew if the Dublin City Council would have disposed of this land for a public-private partnership arrangement, the councillors would have to vote on it somewhere down the line. So, we knew, at some point...they would have a big say in what happens in the future of this land. So, that's why we were beginning to work them. Recognising the power of that one and working them"

"...the Task Force had worked with the councillors and said 'Do you realise that there was 3,200 signatures of support gathered in the area, from May to the end of June 2004, for the

position of the old plan? We need you, as city councillors, to take that seriously'...So, there's a whole lot of politicking going on..." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

The community was then in a position to reap the benefits of having put in a lot of groundwork with the councillors. In a climate of distrust and mounting concern regarding Dublin City Council's lack of attention to the community's needs and wishes, a Fine Gael councillor from a neighbouring estate in Inchicore proposed a motion that the city councillors should reject the new draft framework plan. This councillor was a member of the St. Michael's Estate Task Force and was very concerned by the perceived arrogance of the City Council officials:

"One of the local councillors, she probably should have waited, really, but she panicked...the problem really was that...even though there was a lot being said at the consultation,...Dublin City Council were still not taking any of it. They were being seen to take none of it on board, really...Because when we'd ask at the Task Force 'What's the feedback?' and say to them 'What's going on?'...'What's it like at the consultation? What's being told?', they were only saying 'Ah well, people didn't like this'. But they weren't reflecting back the huge level of opposition. They weren't really reflecting any of that back." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

She had undertaken her own questionnaire in Inchicore regarding the future of St. Michael's Estate and had found overwhelming opposition to the draft framework plan, which persuaded her to put the motion to the city councillors:

"...when things really got bad and I put out the questionnaire and I got the results back, I was really taken aback by the numbers of people and the difference of opinion. I decided well...if we were going to do anything about Michael's Estate and this plan, this framework plan had to be stopped in its tracks. So, I wrote to all the city councillors, there were 52 of them, and I explained what had gone on...and I asked for their support. To my huge surprise on the night of the Council, every party and every councillor in the chamber supported the motion. It was the first night back after the new elections...So, the vote went through unanimously, there was no objections, there was nobody abstaining that I know of...You know, somebody said to me, coming out of it, that it was a great political victory. I didn't see it as a political victory. I felt it was a victory for a community that was treated very badly...telling people 'We're in consultation. We'll listen to you but that doesn't mean necessarily we're going to implement what you had in mind'. I think that gives a very false hope for people and it gives City Council a very false image." (Councillor A)

Although this councillor made an independent decision to put this motion before the councillors, the tenants attended the council meeting in support. Gaining the unanimous support of the city councillors, this motion was successful.

*"...when the councillor went and informed us that 'I'm putting a motion to the city councillors on Monday the 6th'...we said 'OK! It's about St. Michael's Estate, we're going! It's in our vested interest to know how that pans out'... She was asking the 52 councillors to object to the new draft framework plan prepared for...St. Michael's Estate."
"...Now, we didn't go with the motion to City Council but, naturally, we went and supported it. But, she took that initiative on herself. I think there was a bit of a fear that the Council weren't really taking onboard...and they weren't likely to take onboard what people were saying." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)*

Although pleased with the level of support from the councillors and the rejection of the new draft framework plan, for which there was no support among the tenants, the community remained very concerned regarding the implications of the councillors' decision:

"It was a good move...But, you know, the consequences of that move! We don't know what's going to happen next or where we're at now. There's no plan on the table that they could even negotiate with us on. They're going to be sore...They [the councillors] didn't make any recommendations to the officials, mind. They just all voted in rejection to the new plan...We

need them now to probably vote that the Council...start the process of designing another plan with us..." (Regeneration worker, St. Michael's Estate)

Thus, there were fears regarding the possibility that this development would anger City Council officials and cause further delays. It was felt that the rejection of the plan might provide justification for Dublin City Council to continue its apparent policy of neglecting the estate and encouraging tenants to transfer out, further eroding community leadership.

"The response was, they were quite angry. They were very, very angry with the outcome and they, kind of, gave subtle threats that perhaps now we had forced a delay, that we might be left at the bottom of the pile...We'd now delayed the prospect of anything happening on this site by our actions... So, that...frightened us because we're not trying to delay things...We're actually trying to get the best deal for the people. And by the best deal...we want to deliver houses for people on this site, we also want an adequate number of houses on the site because there's over 6,000 and something are on the housing list in Dublin city." (Respondent not willing to be quoted directly on this point)

There was a recognition that it would be impossible to regenerate St. Michael's Estate without Dublin City Council. However, there were fears that the relationship between the City Council and the community had deteriorated to such an extent that it would be impossible to overcome and have any meaningful input into any new plan:

"St. Michael's Estate I think is highly interesting as, if you look at it on a test case basis, on the way they're dealing with people, they're making fuck-ups right across the board. They really are now. So much so that, when it does actually come to a head, they're not actually going to be in a position to sit down and talk to us. They've done that much damage to the relationships there. And it's being replicated now across the rest of Inchicore. Because if people come on our side, well then they're not going to have any time for City Council, after what they've been doing...And I mean at the end of the day, we've a plan to come up with, we've a community to regenerate and we've buildings to build. So...there's a lot of work to be done and, at the end of the day, we're not going to do it without City Council. That's the reality of it. But there has to be a medium ground, where they have to actually come to the conclusion and say 'Well, we can't actually do it without them'. And they haven't got there yet. As far as they're concerned, they've still got that arrogance about them, that they can do it regardless because it's all about the money." (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

Indeed, there was a perception that Dublin City Council had no intention of including the community of St. Michael's Estate in its redevelopment:

"...at the end of the day, who are they actually designing the houses, the units, for? They're not designing them for families, for us. They really aren't because if they were, they'd actually have houses on it. So, they're not interested in appealing to us. We're the past, we're not even the present any more, we're the past. The future is something totally different and it doesn't include us. Or they certainly don't seem to want to include us. They're quite happy to disperse people who live in poverty around the city so they can hide the problem of poverty. And all they're really doing is just leaving it there for another generation to deal with and, you know, by the time it actually comes to the surface, it will be a hell of a lot worse. So, physically they may be spot on with their designs and that but socially they're just so, so far off the mark it's just unbelievable. It's hard to believe that they'd actually go ahead with what they're planning to do." (Former resident & activist, St. Michael's Estate)

5.2. COMMUNITY INFORMATION GROUP, DUBLIN WASTE-TO-ENERGY PROJECT

Context

The *Waste Management Plan for the Dublin Region* was adopted by Dublin City Council in late 1998 and outlined its strategy for dealing with the waste generated in the four Dublin local authorities, Dublin City, Fingal, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown and South Dublin, over the next five years. A dramatic decrease in landfill, from 90% to 15% of all household waste, was envisaged. A corresponding increase in recycling, from 10% to 60% of household waste, was planned, with the incineration of the remaining 25% in such a way as to recover energy from the waste (Dublin City Council, 1998). A siting and feasibility study was conducted in 1999. Four sites were identified as potentially suitable for a waste-to-energy facility, with the Poolbeg Peninsula being the preferred site. By 2004, the project was behind schedule. Dublin City Council had invited contractors to tender for the construction and operation of the thermal treatment plant, although neither the exact site or the technology to be used had been finalised.

The disadvantaged urban communities of Ringsend and Irishtown, together with the much more affluent area of Sandymount, are situated in close proximity to the preferred site on the Poolbeg Peninsula. These communities will have several opportunities to participate in statutory planning processes before the planned thermal treatment plant can go ahead. The developer must obtain planning permission from An Bord Pleanála, an Integrated Pollution Control License and a Waste Licence from the Environmental Protection Agency, a license to generate electricity from the ESB and compulsory purchase orders from An Bord Pleanála. Each of these four statutory planning processes provides opportunities for local communities to have a formal input into the decision-making process, including written submissions and, in some cases, oral hearings (Dublin City Council official).

The Community Information Group Approach

Dublin City Council also took the unusual approach of introducing additional measures, to facilitate non-statutory participation, with the formation of the 'Ringsend Community Information Group' in 2001. The purpose of establishing this group of independent volunteers was to give the participants an opportunity to gather information about thermal treatment and the impact of the planned plant on the area. This was intended to encourage the informal dissemination of the information gained throughout their communities, equipping them to participate fully in the statutory consultation process. Concerns identified by the community information group were also intended to inform the scoping document to be prepared by Dublin City Council, outlining the issues that must be addressed by the developer's environmental impact assessment. The specific terms of reference for the community information group were as follows:

"To identify issues of concern regarding the proposal to build a Waste to Energy facility on the Poolbeg Peninsula

To assess the work that has been carried out by Dublin Corporation to determine the need for such a facility, and the action that has been taken to identify an appropriate site for such a facility

To discuss (with the help of experts who support or oppose the use of energy from waste as part of an integrated waste management strategy) the impact of similar facilities on local communities and on the health and safety of humans and the environment

To indicate the questions that would need to be addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement to respond to areas of community concern

To prepare a report on the Community Interest Group process for dissemination to the community and interested stakeholders" (Ringsend CIG, 2002, 12).

The city council convened a meeting at a local GAA club, in order to inform the local community of its plans to develop a thermal treatment plant on the Poolbeg Peninsula. Interested individuals were invited to fill-in an application form to join the community information group. Leaflets and forms were also circulated to houses in the area. Forty-eight

people returned forms expressing an interest in joining the group, which was considered an excellent response (Selection Committee member).

Selection Process

An independent selection committee was established, comprising a local Garda, a local school principal and a TCD lecturer whose field of expertise is marine biology. The selection committee was asked to select the participants on the basis of several criteria, which were designed to ensure the representation of a broad cross-section of the community, including:

“The range in terms of, shall we say, socio-economic standing of members of the focus group, the range in terms of, I suppose, geographical districts, so that you would have people that lived close by, people that lived perhaps a little bit further away but might still claim to be within the ambit of the impact. We were asked to look for a range in terms of, shall we say, educational qualifications or attainments, a range of professions...and also a range in terms of the kinds of people we would get, so that...it wouldn't be dominated by shall we say the professional middle classes. You would try and get a range of occupations from students, unemployed, right up through, if you like, people who might be professional environmental consultants. I mean, we were told to try to achieve as wide a range as possible.” (Selection Committee member A)

On the basis of the information provided on the application forms, the applicants were categorised within a matrix under various headings such as geographical district, socio-economic status, education, employment and scientific literacy. The selection committee aimed to draw at least one participant from each category under these heading:

“...it wasn't a perfect procedure because obviously...in some categories, you didn't get a huge choice. So, in some cases you would have to say 'Well, perhaps this category will be accounted for by one person', whereas this category or some other category might have had three or four. Just the way it fell!” (Selection Committee member A)

Eighteen of the forty-eight applicants were selected by the selection committee and invited to join the community information group. It was felt that a group of eighteen was small enough to work together effectively but large enough to allow the inclusion of a variety of backgrounds and areas of expertise.

The Community Information Group Process

The community information group met seven times over the course of one year (Ringsend CIG 2001a-b, 2002a-e). Members of the public and representatives of Dublin City Council and [named company] attended these meetings, which were chaired by a facilitator provided by the project team. The group also met unofficially up to thirty times, without any representatives of the project team. Five people resigned from the community information group, for various reasons, over the course of the year and one replacement joined. The community information group's final report was produced in October 2002 (Ringsend CIG, 2002f).

Outcomes

The adoption of the community information group approach represented a new departure in Dublin City Council's engagement with the public. Furthermore, it was undertaken in relation to the particularly thorny issues of waste management and incineration. In this context, Dublin City Council made some noteworthy achievements in pioneering this new approach to consultation in the Republic of Ireland. Probably most important, the access to independent professional advice and certain types of information afforded to the community information group was unparalleled among the case studies included in this research. Significant time and resources had clearly been invested in the community information group process. Experts on a wide range of relevant issues, including thermal treatment technologies, ecology, dioxins, environmental law, environmental impact assessment, planning,

transportation and climatology, were recruited, to make presentations to the community information group and answer their questions (Ringsend CIG (2002f)). The community information group seemed broadly happy with the level of access to experts on topics relevant to thermal treatment and found their presentations useful, concluding that:

“The group in general appreciated the chance to be able to hear from these experts, and for the most part the feeling is that Dublin City Council personnel worked hard to source the visiting speakers, and to persuade them to attend. Most people agree that they learned a lot from this experience.” (Ringsend CIG, 2002f, 31)

Unusually, funding was also provided for the community information group to hire their own independent legal expert, to clarify the legal position on several issues of concern.

“...we got what we wanted from the Corporation because they said that they'd pay for any legal things... Well after a bit of pressure, they said that they would pay for it. So, we got a solicitor and a barrister and we got legal information from them.” (Ringsend CIG member B)

Notwithstanding these significant achievements, the community information group process was not considered a success by either Dublin City Council or the participants.

Too Little Too Late!

Perhaps the most serious flaw with the community information group process was that it was undertaken at too late a stage in the planning of a new waste management facility for the community to have any meaningful input to decision-making. The *Waste Management Plan for the Dublin Region* was adopted in 1998, several years prior to the establishment of the community information group in 2001. This strategic plan was informed by the *Dublin Waste Management Strategy Study*, which was undertaken in 1997. As part of this study, comment was invited from the general public and non-governmental organisations. Of the 134 written submissions received, 45 were from private individuals and thirteen from non-governmental organisations, ranging from residents' associations to Greenpeace Ireland. The remainder were from state agencies, public representatives and commercial interests.

Public information centres, with displays, leaflets and questionnaires, were then held for a one-month period in each of the four local authority areas, in the county buildings and other suitable venues such as shopping centres. Questionnaires were completed by 357 groups or individuals. Individual meetings were also held with various environmental organisations. Based on this study, the *Draft Waste Management Plan for the Dublin Region* was formulated. The draft plan was distributed to all of the libraries and public representatives in the region and put on public display in two locations in each of the four local authority areas for two months, in a similar way to the draft city development plan.

A leaflet incorporating a questionnaire was made available at each display, 175 of which were completed. Just 46 written submissions were made, fifteen of which were from private individuals and twenty from non-governmental organisations. However, possible locations for the planned thermal treatment plant were not specified in the *Waste Management Plan for the Dublin Region* so the Ringsend/Irishtown communities remained largely unaware of the plan and its potential impact on their areas. It seems that these communities had little input to the formulation of the strategic plan, as no written submissions to either the initial study or the draft plan were received from Ringsend/Irishtown-based community groups or campaigns (Dublin City Council, 1998).

Once the *Waste Management Plan for the Dublin Region* (1998) had been adopted, the City Manager was obliged by law to proceed with implementing the policy of developing a thermal treatment plant to serve the Dublin Region within the densely populated Dublin City Council area (Hyland, 2002). By 1999, Poolbeg Peninsula had emerged from the siting and feasibility study as the preferred site for the new facility, on the grounds that it is at least 1km. from the nearest residence and is zoned Z7, “To provide for the protection and creation of industrial uses and facilitate opportunities for employment creation”. It was not until this point, when Dublin City Council held a public meeting, that the Ringsend/Irishtown communities became

widely aware of the plans to develop a thermal treatment plant on Poolbeg Peninsula (Dublin City Council official).

Thus, two crucial strategic planning decisions, to start incinerating waste in the Dublin Region and to locate the requisite thermal treatment plant in Dublin City rather than in Fingal, South Dublin or Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown, had already been made by the time Dublin City Council made a concerted attempt to engage the Ringsend/Irishtown communities in the planning process:

“...another thing that annoyed me was that the group was set up either to pick our brains or to disseminate information but they never consulted, in the sense of asking advice from the local community. Because there’s quite a lot of enthusiasm for waste reduction. And instead of being public consultation to ease the way of an incinerator, it could have been public consultation to get waste reduction really moving because there would have been much more enthusiasm for something like that. But, they didn’t bother with that.” (Ringsend CIG member A & former councillor)

“...the whole thing smacked of: they had decided to put an incinerator in Poolbeg and then they were afterwards trying to justify the technology and the location. Whereas, if the consultation had been at the beginning of the whole process, to look into the alternatives other than incineration and to really look at the locations. There was an engineering report, that made a strong recommendation to site an incinerator somewhere on the M50, so that waste heat could be used in industry, which there wouldn’t be an opportunity to do down on Poolbeg.” (Ringsend CIG member A & former councillor)

Not surprisingly, these decisions were viewed with some suspicion by the community. It was felt that the decision to locate the new thermal treatment plant in Dublin City rather than one of the less densely populated local authority areas emerged from negotiations between the four local authorities comprising the Dublin Region, regarding the distribution of landfill and thermal treatment facilities, rather than any objective site selection process:

“Fingal were the last people to sign-off on the waste management plan. And the deal was done that Fingal would take the landfill, as long as they didn’t get that incinerator, even though those areas had all the infrastructure, the big roads, they had plenty of free land. This is where we showed that the feasibility study done on the Poolbeg site was completely and utterly flawed.” (Ringsend CIG member C)

“...we discovered...the fact that they hopped, skipped and jumped to Poolbeg. Poolbeg was always the end of the line for them and that was it. So, they just made everything fit in place, to show that they had done feasibility studies. So, they chose the Poolbeg Peninsula and then they made everything fit - the criteria.” (Ringsend CIG member C)

As a consequence of the total lack of engagement with the community about the key issues, Dublin City Council’s subsequent efforts in Ringsend/Irishtown, however genuine, were interpreted as a PR exercise designed to smooth the way for the implementation of decisions which had already been made. Not surprisingly, this greatly angered the Ringsend / Irishtown communities, which remained implacably opposed to the development of a thermal treatment plant on Poolbeg Peninsula, primarily on air quality and health grounds:

“...I got the impression that they were just trying to steam-roller this incinerator through...” (Ringsend CIG member A & former councillor)

“They’re just pushing it through. It was only window dressing with our group. I knew that! I knew they were trying to use us...they were only going through the motions.” (Ringsend CIG member B)

Throughout the community information group process, Dublin City Council continued to bring forward the planned waste-to-energy facility on Poolbeg Peninsula, acquiring land through compulsory purchase orders and advertising for tenders from developers to operate a

thermal treatment plant (Dublin City Council official). Indeed, a representative of Dublin City Council had to admit that so much time and resources had been invested in bringing forward the planned facility at Poolbeg, that revisiting the siting decision at that stage was not considered an option:

"...when you reach a stage where you have invested so much time in public involvement in developing strategies, where you gave public notice, submissions were taken onboard and it boils down to the siting issue...you can't keep revisiting and going back...In my view, that can't happen because of the lead-in period to develop these things...to review and start again, it could be 2007 before we make any decisions and discover that zero waste really isn't achievable and we've no facility. One fine day we'll wake up and there'll be no bin collected because there's no place to dispose of it, you know. That is the concern." (Dublin City Council official A)

According to this representative of Dublin City Council, the primary purposes of the Ringsend Community Information Group were first, to equip local residents with the information required to make a case at the forthcoming statutory oral hearings and second, to ensure that the developer did not omit any pertinent issues from the environmental impact statement:

"There was already public involvement in the strategy, there was public involvement later on in what precisely should the selection criteria be. Then it boiled down to, you know, four suitable sites identified. It emerged as the most suitable on the basis of zoning, distance from residents, the nearest residence is a kilometre away and so on. I suppose we focused ourselves into sort of saying 'Look, we have a responsibility to investigate and fully process the suitability of what's already been regarded as a suitable site. You will have your opportunity to go through the EIS process. We want to be absolutely sure that you are well-equipped to participate in the EIS process'...There has been a serious effort to inform the local communities of what are the impacts, the issues. I wouldn't say deliberately that we made any effort to persuade people to change their minds but that they could honestly represent with the fullest information possible. And I think we were thinking now of the oral hearings, that sort of thing and making their submissions, that they didn't go in half-cocked, that they had all of the information they needed. And I suppose from our point of view, probably selfishly, we didn't want to overlook an issue. There may be things that were local, that maybe wouldn't be known to consultants that come in from Denmark and places like that and that are very important." (Dublin City Council official A)

Thus, Dublin City Council's motivation for initiating the community information group process was a combination of providing information to the public and expediting the development of a thermal treatment plant. It could not be described as genuine community participation.

Past Experience

Negative past experiences of dealing with Dublin City Council set the scene for the adversarial tone of the community information group process. The Ringsend / Irishtown communities already felt aggrieved, due to the existing concentration of utilities and industry in the area, including a power station and a sewage treatment plant on Poolbeg Peninsula. It was felt that these land-uses had already had an adverse impact on the health and quality of life of the neighbouring residential communities, with higher than average incidence of both brain haemorrhage and thyroid problems. Previous attempts to further concentrate such facilities, including an unsuccessful application to develop a hospital waste incinerator on Poolbeg Peninsula, had exacerbated this sense of injustice:

"It was very badly run-down for years and every waste disposal outfit in Dublin was based down here. We used to have the lead mining company here, which used to smelt lead, just at the back of the library here. It went on for years and the highest lead content in the whole of Ireland was in Ringsend. The sewage all came down here, the dump was down here as well, the landfill. Every dirty industry, the scrap metal business was down here as well. All the waste disposal was in Ringsend. So, we got rid of a few of them and then this thing is plonked

down on the plate again. So, we're going to have to handle the waste coming from Balbriggan to Greystones. All the waste coming from all those areas will be concentrated here" (Ringsend CIG member B).

Furthermore, Dublin City Council had a poor history of enforcing environmental standards on Poolbeg Peninsula, particularly with regard to dumping:

"...the City Council has a rotten history of not enforcing anything. Now they have some environmental officer now prosecuting people for dumping and things like that on the Poolbeg. So, things have improved a little bit. But mostly the history is, anybody could do what they like and the City Council looks the other way." (Ringsend CIG member A & former councillor)

"On the far side of the river there, there's a load of itinerants and every night they're burning copper wire and waste materials. They're bringing it in from all over Dublin and charging people to dump their waste down there and they're burning it. They're having these massive bonfires every night. [Named individual, local TD] was down one Saturday to open a playground in there and I was explaining it to him. And all of a sudden, the fires started up. So, I took him up on the balcony and said 'There you are. There's what we have to put up with all the time. The Gards won't go in. The fire brigade won't go in and you're talking to me about an incinerator.'" (Ringsend CIG member B)

Perhaps most seriously, Dublin City Council had failed to deliver on its initial guarantee that its new sewage treatment plant would not generate odours. Continuing problems with odours from the sewage treatment plant have led local residents to conclude that Dublin City Council is incapable of properly managing emissions from a thermal treatment plant:

"We've been sort of proved right so far because this new sewage disposal plant down here, there's a horrendous stench coming out of it at the moment, even up into Sandymount. And they can't control that so there's no chance of them controlling an incinerator on top of it!" (Ringsend CIG member B)

Dublin City Council did not manage to inspire confidence that they were capable of managing any aspect of the planned thermal treatment plant, from air quality to traffic:

"...we got an awful lot of lies from the Corporation...I told one guy, I said 'There was a massive big fire down here in the Hammond Lane scrap-yard and all the smoke on that day, it blew this way, black, heavy smoke'. And they said the prevailing winds should take it all out to sea, from the incinerator. So at this stage, there was a fierce fire, it went on for three days, heavy, black smoke, and the Corporation went around telling the people here to close their windows and doors. That was their answer to this thing! So, I told the Corporation man, I said 'You've brought the plagues upon us', I said 'You've polluted the water and you've polluted the land and now you've polluted the air'. And this is exactly what they have done in this area...Now, they said they were doing an air quality test on the whole of Dublin, so of Ballyfermot and somewhere else, Dundrum. And I said 'Did you do one on Ringsend?' 'No'. Now, the one place where they're going to put the incinerator!"

"...The guys from the Transport Department came down one time and they said they were in charge of the traffic in Dublin city. And I reckoned they were very brave men to come and admit to that! But anyway, in the heel of the hunt, we were questioning them and they said they didn't know anything about this incinerator thing until two months before that. Now, these are the people that are in charge of all the infrastructure, which was going to have to be made to put in. There's a little narrow road down there, 500 trucks a day, going up and down it. Well, that's 500 down and 500 back on a little narrow road, through Ringsend, through Sandymount. There's no roads for these trucks...They had no plan whatsoever for the additional traffic coming into the area. Absolutely none! They admitted that." (Ringsend CIG member B)

Lack of Transparency

Both the community information group and the wider community were flooded with information relating to incineration in general. However, the effectiveness of the community information group was clearly compromised by a lack of openness and transparency on the part of Dublin City Council and several references were made to 'lies' and 'half truths'. There was a widespread perception that Dublin City Council officials evaded repeated requests for specific information about the planned thermal treatment plant or provided incorrect information. Community information group members found information on the siting of the facility and the type of technology to be used particularly difficult to obtain:

"It was all a cover up. They don't tell the truth until the whole thing is out. They're extremely evasive as well in their answers." (Ringsend CIG member B)

"That's another thing! Throughout the thing, there were a whole lot of half-truths in their reports. So for instance, it said that it just had to be some type of thermal treatment, so it could be incineration or it could be - I forget what the other technologies are. But then, if you read some other report, it said that the other technologies weren't feasible, you know. And it said in the recommendations that you would be able to use the waste heat for district heating. But actually, most of us know that there's already a surplus of waste heat down on the Poolbeg, from the power station. So there's all this sort of, you know, the technical people can say what they like and if you're not technical, you'll believe them." (Ringsend CIG member A & former councillor)

"It was a complete cover-up! It was only after extreme pressure that we managed to get the site from them, where the site was going to be. This was after extreme pressure. The plans weren't even drawn up, at that stage. Now, the whole thing that amazed me, if I go to build an extension onto my house, the first thing I do is put in for planning - The first thing I do is go and get a set of plans drawn up and then I put in an application for permission. Then I go and get a contractor and then they'll give you an estimate for it and then I go ahead. Now, they're doing this the complete opposite! They have a contract out at the minute, for people to give them a price to build this incinerator and to run it and they haven't even got plans done yet." (Ringsend CIG member B)

A similar lack of transparency was evident from the timing of the advertisement of the review of the *Waste Management Plan for the Dublin Region*. Advertising the review on the same day as the local elections, together with setting an August deadline for submissions, implies a lack of true commitment to involving the public in planning for infrastructural provision:

"...on the day of the elections there was an ad in the papers from Dublin City Council, looking for submissions to the revision of the Waste Management Plan. So, that's absolutely disgraceful, that they put it out on the day of the election. I mean, they did that on purpose, so that nobody would see it...in particular, any activists, any politicians wouldn't have seen it. And the deadline is the 28th of August, to make submissions to the Waste Management Plan because they have to review the Waste Management Plan. Everyone's on holidays...So, this is just something they're obliged by legislation to do so they've no intention of doing it properly. And it's a pity because if they did do it properly, then they'd probably have people behind the project more. But, when they are seen to be subversive, you know, trying to just corrupt the whole legal consultation procedure, then people really don't have any faith in them." (Ringsend CIG member A & former councillor)

A Dublin City Council official argued that a certain degree of vagueness regarding the two most contentious issues, siting and technology, was unavoidable. It was argued that the precise site depended on the technology, which would not be finalised until the developer was selected:

"Incineration is well-established in Europe but there are other emerging technologies so the possibility of other technologies emerging couldn't be ruled out, you know. From that point of view, because of the vagueness or the difficulty with satisfactorily answering all of their

questions, our credibility was a little bit challenged, to say the least.” (Dublin City Council official A)

Nevertheless, Dublin City Council did seem to have had a reasonable idea of the preferred technology and siting requirements of the developers who were eventually invited to submit tenders:

“...the thing that keeps recurring with the meetings we’ve had with the public is the credibility. Vague in answers in some instances and, unfortunately, we have to be because of now we don’t know the precise site requirement. The developer will dictate that in what he’s proposing. We’ve a fair idea and we’ve been a little bit coy in relation to the particular technology. We’ve said waste-to-energy, thermally treated. There are other technologies, as I’ve mentioned...But, on the basis of the short-listing of the four, we can say that their track record, whether they have been involved in the past or are currently involved in incineration projects. So, it’s most likely that the selected bidder will be proposing incineration, I don’t think there’s much of a question about that. We have to look at, in more detail than at...the provider, say ‘Look, I have a facility down in Wicklow or wherever or Redcar, we can do something else or treat stuff or transport it’. You know, you don’t know...We’ll have to look at other sites, obviously, in the EIS and why we’re coming down heavy on this one. Are there any changing circumstances since the siting study was done.” (Dublin City Council official A)

Lack of Trust

Partly as a consequence of this lack of transparency, the community information group process was fraught with confusion and mistrust, which proved impossible to overcome. The community information group suspected ulterior motives on the part of Dublin City Council, in relation to everything from the selection process, to the facilitation of the meetings, to the site selection process, to the real reasons for establishing the group.

Selecting a limited number of applicants to participate in the community information group created immediate suspicion. This was exacerbated by the inclusion of a small number of participants from outside the immediate area, some of whom were in favour of incineration. Members of the community information group, who were overwhelmingly opposed to incineration, concluded that these participants were Dublin City Council ‘plants’.

“The only one person that was for it was this guy, it was quite obvious he was a plant...He was from...Sutton. And I asked him ‘What are you doing on this?’ ‘Oh’ he says ‘I’m interested’. He was all for it! And it transpired then, we found out who he was, he was a hydraulics engineer, marine hydraulics. He had worked for the Corporation at some point down the line!...And it was so obvious that he’d been put there...Once we knew what he was...we made it quite obvious that we knew. But he had a hard neck, he stuck out at it. He was all for the whole thing. But I mean, like, he stuck out like a sore thumb, you know, in the middle of the whole thing. And his views, every time it went up ‘Oh, well I agree with this and I agree with that’. And then he said ‘You should put in for a swimming pool down here and you could use the water to heat the swimming pool for the local kids’. And I said ‘The local kids can swim in the sea! The sea is clean. It is now at the minute’. They’re going to have nowhere even to play, when this bloody thing comes in.” (Ringsend CIG member B)

“...the way that the members were chosen was a huge issue. We didn’t know who had been invited to be on this group...There seemed to be one or two plants on the group...there was a guy who - I think he was actually employed by - Who are the developers? Big developers down on the quays...And he didn’t live in the area, so it’s very, very odd that he should be on the group. Well, I think he was employed by [named property development company]. I don’t think he was just an interested citizen.” (Ringsend CIG member A & former councillor)

However, a member of the selection committee argued emphatically that this was not the case. Dublin City Council and their consultants had no opportunity to interfere in the selection process, as the selection committee met alone. Furthermore, he felt that it was important to

include people with a range of perspectives on the community information group, rather than restricting membership to people from the same neighbourhood with similar views:

“...I can appreciate what they were saying, that if you don't live here, you won't have the same perspective. But, that's the whole thing about the focus group...you're not picking a team to look at it from one perspective...because the aim of the focus group is to make sure all the appropriate questions are asked and not just some of the questions. So, unless you pick a wide focus group, you're inevitably going to bias the questions that are asked and some questions that perhaps should be asked, might never get asked. So, you have to keep it wide, although that necessarily means you're not picking people always of the same background, the same viewpoint.” (Selection committee member A)

The community information group's official meetings were chaired by a professional facilitator. Although this facilitator was supposed to be independent, there was a strong perception that she was steering the group according to Dublin City Council's agenda, rather than facilitating discussion of the issues identified by the group as being important:

“It was very annoying, the sessions that we did have were chaired by somebody who was engaged by the project team and it was as if she had her agenda. So, I think what the idea was...that they'd get the people on the group to discuss the issue and, you know, make decisions and what-not between us. But, we never got to that and part of it was due to very bad chairing from this woman...she didn't facilitate. She was trying to steer the thing so that was a source of enormous frustration and people resigning...We never really got to discuss the issue at all. It was hopeless.” (Ringsend CIG member A & former councillor)

This eventually led to the community information group nominating their own chairperson from among the members.

With regard to the site selection process, several theories were circulating regarding the reasons underpinning Dublin City Council's preference for locating the thermal treatment plant on Poolbeg Peninsula. One community information group member felt that locating the thermal treatment plant close to other pollutive industries would prevent problems at a later stage should air quality and health in the area be adversely affected:

“...if you look at other countries where you have incinerators, you will always find the same things running along the same lines. And when I asked some doctors about this, they said that...if there was an outbreak of illness or anything, because there's so much other pollutive industry in the area, you cannot finger one of them as being responsible. Was it the dust from the cement? Was it the fumes from the power station? Was it the toxic fumes from the sewage treatment plant? And there's another big factory down there on Hammond Lane. So, you can never pinpoint. So, if you have hot spots of areas where you have either children becoming ill or if you have high lead levels, if you have high dioxin levels, you cannot pinpoint which of those industries caused it.” (Ringsend CIG member C)

Another respondent felt that locating the thermal treatment plant beside the sewage treatment plant was significant:

“...I may be jumping the gun a little bit here, but I think there's a hidden agenda here from the Corporation, to have this incinerator put down here. Next-door to it is the sewage...treatment plant. Now next - this year I think actually, there's EC regulations coming in, that they can't dispose of the waste that they have from this plant. At the moment, they're spreading it on agricultural land and forestry land. There's no tests been done whatsoever with what's leaching out from these things. So, the EC regulations will mean they can't do it any more, without very, very strict - So, what they can do, they burn it, you see, and they have an incinerator next-door. They use the heat from the incinerator to dry out the waste matter and then they can burn it. And it's all down on the peninsula, it's all down in the one place. I think this is the hidden agenda from the Corporation.” (Ringsend CIG member B)

While there is no way to verify these perceptions, they are important illustrations of how Dublin City Council's failed to build any trust with the Ringsend/Irishtown communities during the community information group process.

Finally, Dublin City Council's motives for establishing the community information group were questioned. There was a general feeling that the community information group had not emerged from a genuine wish to facilitate community participation in planning for major infrastructure. Several participants expressed the view that Dublin City Council merely wished to give the impression of consulting with the community, while they did not really take their concerns onboard:

"It was just too one-sided and I [initially] refused to participate in a so-called public consultation which wasn't. You know, it was an oxymoron of the whole thing. It was 'Sit there and listen to we're telling yous! And then come up with the right answers, that we want'. So, the whole thing was very skewed." (Ringsend CIG member C)

Indeed, it was felt that Dublin City Council officials saw themselves as the experts and did not value community input:

"There's no room for discussion and there's no room for objective criticism...And they also have an attitude to working class communities, I have to say. And the attitude to working class communities is 'How dare you question us?'...We're looked on as uppity working class if we question them..." (Ringsend CIG member C)

There was also a strong concern among members of the community information group that the real reason for establishing the group was to minimise delays in developing the thermal treatment plant, by ensuring that no important local concerns were omitted from the environmental impact assessment:

"...they saw the consultative group as not so much to disseminate information, so much as to find out what people's worries were, so that they'd have answers for the planning procedure." (Ringsend CIG member A & former councillor)

Practical Considerations: Timeframe and Information Overload

The practical issues of timeframe and information overload compounded the more fundamental issues of the lack of community input to strategic decision-making, negative past experiences of dealing with Dublin City Council and the lack of transparency and trust, which contributed to the failure of the Ringsend CIG.

The timeframe for the operation of the community information group was considered much too short, reinforcing the participants' perception that the community information group was just a public relations exercise:

"...the time given over to the entire CIG process was seen as far too short to accomplish all that was set out in the beginning. The CIG were required to assimilate a vast amount of information, and they were given very little time or support to allow them to accomplish this satisfactorily...The short extent of the original timetable is seen as yet another indication that Dublin City Council are treating this as a token gesture of consultation, since they were making it extremely difficult for the group to achieve their aims." (Ringsend CIG, 2002f)

There was a widespread feeling that excessive technical information was provided by the experts recruited to present at the community information group meetings and that too many conflicting viewpoints were expressed. This made it difficult and time-consuming for the participants to make sense of the information they were given:

"...there were reams and reams of data totally over everyone's head you would have to be a rocket scientist to understand it. In other words, they were trying to blind us with science..." (Ringsend CIG member B)

“The information supplied to the group was both too detailed and too extensive to be much use. Most people felt they would have needed technical expertise to decode some of the information they were given, and it required substantial commitment with regard to time in order to simply read through it all...Even the experts who were invited to speak at some of the meetings were inclined to be too technical, and often presented contradictory viewpoints, which made it difficult for the CIG to properly assess what they were being told. The general feeling is that too much information, or information that is not easily accessible, is worse than no information at all.” (Ringsend CIG 2002f, 26)

“...members of the group are very clear that very little in the way of consultation actually went on in the course of CIG sessions. Instead, they were provided with an overload of technical information, and a series of complicated briefings, rather than a proper opportunity to debate the issues and offer meaningful feedback.” (Ringsend CIG, 2002f, 14)

Even the information distributed by Dublin City Council at the beginning of the process was seen as being too lengthy and technical for the community to interpret without the aid of professionals:

“They were given three books. One was on the Dublin City Development Plan, one was the waste management plan and the other book was a very technical book around the whole issue of incinerators or thermal treatment plants, that’s the word they use. So, if you can understand, I think they had an eight-week, eight- to ten-week or twelve-week, timeframe for all of this. So, it was very unfair, the fact that all of this technical knowledge, the books - I mean, how long does it take someone to read the Dublin City Development Plan? How long does it take someone to read a waste management plan, right, without any expertise involved? So, I just found the whole thing too much of a set up for locally based people.” (Ringsend CIG member C)

Divide and Conquer!

With few exceptions, members of the community information group were implacably opposed to the siting of a thermal treatment plant in the area. However, there was considerable conflict within both the group and the wider community regarding the best course of action to adopt in challenging the proposal to develop a thermal treatment plant on the Poolbeg peninsula. This conflict adversely affected the communities’ ability to present a united front against the planned thermal treatment plant.

There was considerable concern within the community regarding the legal implications of participating in the community information group. Some people felt that participating in the group would enable Dublin City Council to later argue that it had undertaken a proper consultation process. This concern led to several resignations from the community information group. The same concern was also expressed with regard to the continuing monthly public meetings that superseded the community information group process:

“...I think anybody who is attending it is very foolish because they will have it on their documentation that they did publicly consult with people, you know. So, they’re being used, when they attend those meetings. Because they will have a profile and they will have an attendance record of people that attended these public consultation meetings and they can put that into the planning.” (Ringsend CIG member C)

Others felt that it was important to remain involved in the community information group for two reasons. It meant that Dublin City Council could not later argue that there had been no proper consultation because there was no demand for it. It also armed the community with the fullest information possible regarding the planned thermal treatment plant:

“I wanted to know the story within the tent! You have a better opportunity inside than outside.” (Ringsend CIG member B)

Some participants felt that producing a detailed report on their concerns would aid the developer in delivering a watertight environmental impact statement. There was also some resentment that the group was expected 'to do the developer's homework':

"...there are substantial fears that by announcing areas that they wish to see addressed in an EIA this far in advance, they will actually be 'showing their cards', and even facilitating a developer. It may give a developer a chance to prepare ways of answering public concerns, so that the EIA would not uncover any unduly negative impacts, thus allowing the development to proceed unhindered." (Ringsend CIG, 2002f, 18)

However, others were anxious to disseminate their findings about the potential impacts of a thermal treatment plant among their communities. It was felt that this was an opportunity to influence the content of the environmental impact statement and to ensure that all of the pertinent issues are addressed and that the development would be of the highest possible quality should it go ahead. Furthermore, it was felt that failure to report implied a lack of any concerns, which was not the case. It was eventually decided that the community information group would produce a report documenting the process, without fully documenting their grounds for objecting to the planned thermal treatment plant (Ringsend CIG, 2002f).

Even the local campaign group, which had been established to oppose the thermal treatment plant, did not seem very inclusive. Comprising delegates from various residents' associations and so on, members of the community information group described it as a 'closed shop':

"...they have a campaign called Combined Residents Against Incineration (CRAI) and that has been set up for a while and...they've got a few people on a committee who are delegates. So, they don't even have to report back to the committee or whatever. So, in a way it's a clique but then in a way they're just getting on with it. It's just a pity they don't go a little bit more public." (Ringsend CIG member A & former councillor)

Although several members of the CRAI had been included on the community information group, they had been among those who resigned.

5.3. COMMUNITY LIAISON COMMITTEE, DUBLIN DOCKLANDS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Context

The advent of the containerisation of cargo led to a dramatic loss of employment in Dublin Port. Together with the demise of the area's traditional industries, it resulted in the economic and physical decline of the Dublin Docklands (DDDA, 2003):

"The social and economic profile of the Docklands changed considerably during the 20th century. Resident communities more than halved in number to 17,400 living in 6,700 households by 1996. The local economy has undergone a fundamental restructuring within the last 30 years. Employment in port-handling activities declined dramatically with the advent of containerisation and many of the traditional industries such as gas manufacturing, flour milling and warehousing have been lost from the Area. However, other industries have emerged and new service industries have located within new development in the Docklands, with financial services concentrating in the IFSC and George's Quay." (DDDA, 2003, 13)

Characterised by high rates of early school-leaving, the indigenous communities are ill-equipped to take advantage of employment in the financial services sector which has been created in more recent years:

"Of course, unemployment was a major rot. It was affecting not only the economy of the community but also the morale. It was traditionally an area for early school leavers because of the Dockland, industrial-type jobs." (Community Liaison Committee member A)

The Dublin Docklands comprises five constituent residential communities: Sheriff Street / North Wall, North Strand and East Wall on the north-side of the river Liffey and City Quay / Westland Row and Ringsend / Irishtown on the south-side. Any agency charged with regenerating Dublin's extensive Docklands in the late-1990s would have had to overcome deep-rooted distrust and resentment on the part of these communities, arising from a long history of perceived neglect and ill-treatment by Dublin City Council.

As early as the late-1970s, Dublin City Council's strategy of depopulating the north inner city in order to facilitate redevelopment for commercial use engendered serious community opposition:

"I first became interested in planning issues in 1978, when Dublin Corporation developed a plan to depopulate the north inner city. And that became the catalyst for [named individual, TD]'s emergence as an independent TD. It was that campaign to prevent that. Basically, what the Corporation decided was that the south side of the city had reached saturation point because they were as far as Ballsbridge and there was nobody going to be knocking down homes in Ballsbridge, to build office blocks. So, they decided on a strategy of depopulating the inner city, from the Liffey to Mountjoy Square, and commercially developing it. And the local people resisted. Now, part of the reasoning or the logic behind it was they wanted to knock down the old housing. They said it was no longer sustainable and that it should be knocked down. But rather than replacing the housing, they wanted to move the people all out and replace it with commercial development...It was included in the development plan...But, it was deeply opposed by all the local people. And the Corporation, as arrogant as usual, didn't care about the local people because, as far as they were concerned 'Drive them all out'. So, I became interested at that stage and I became actively involved in the local community. And of course, that campaign gave us an introduction to the ins and outs, to some degree, of the planning system and how you could affect it and influence it."

"...there was a large campaign of resistance against that [strategy of depopulation], which ultimately proved successful when [named individual] got elected to the Dáil...he held the balance of power in 1982 I think. So, the Government couldn't be formed without his vote and part of his vote was guarantee that this plan would be withdrawn." (Community Liaison Committee member B)

The Custom House Docks Development Authority (CHDDA)

The Custom House Docks Development Authority (CHDDA) was established under S.8 of the *Urban Renewal Act, 1986* and became the planning and development authority for the Custom House Docks area on the north-side of the River Liffey. A range of financial incentives, including tax allowances, rates remission and rent allowances, were made available, in order to stimulate development. Over the ten-year period of its existence, the CHDDA, in association with a new consortium, the Custom House Docks Development Company, and various public agencies facilitated considerable office and residential development. A major flagship project, the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC), comprising 111,500 square metres, was developed on the Custom House Docks. By mid-1997, 4,600 people were employed in the IFSC. Thus, *“this situation represented a dramatic turnaround from the situation of just a decade previously”* (Drudy, 1999).

The relationship between the CHDDA and the north-side Docklands communities was described as problematic. The Authority’s remit was restricted to delivering the economic and physical regeneration, rather than to deliver any gains to these communities:

“...we campaigned to get benefits to the local community out of the development of the Financial Services Centre, i.e. job opportunities and what have you and were quite active...The vehicle that was created for the development of the IFSC was the Customs House Docks Development Authority, CHDDA...They were formed under the Urban Renewal Act of '86 I think and we met them continuously, to look at what advantages could accrue to the local community from this development, particularly in the area of employment. And to some degree, housing was on our agenda. But, the main concentration at the time, needless to say in the mid-eighties when there was huge, massive unemployment levels here, was getting jobs for people. But, they would argue and did argue that that wasn't their remit; their remit was to develop a Financial Services Centre. And in the nature of things, that should provide spin-off benefits but it wasn't their job to make sure it provided spin-off benefits. So, it was a problematic relationship.” (Community Liaison Committee member B)

Indeed, some respondents argues that the CHDDA deliberately created obstacles to community participation, questioning community activists’ mandate:

“...the other thing was that, of course, every time we proposed something, they'd put an obstacle in the way and when we got over the obstacle, then they'd put another obstacle in the way and when we got over that one, they'd put - It was like the Grand National! You know what I mean? And then when you finally got over the last obstacle and thought you were heading for the winning post, they'd say 'Hang on! You don't represent anybody. You've no mandate. You've no right to be talking to us. You've no right to be making demands. You don't represent the local people, the politicians represent the local people'. So, what we did in that situation then was we said 'Ok, we'll create a mandate'. So, we formed almost all of the community-based organisations, either local organisations or organisations providing services locally, we formed them all into a network called ICON, the Inner City Organisations Network. And then when we went to them, we said “We do have a mandate. We're not claiming to represent the local people. We represent all of the organisations working with the local people and working in the local area. And on the basis of that work and the experience and knowledge gained during that work, we have a better idea of what the area and the people in it need than anybody else.” (Community Liaison Committee member B)

The failure of the CHDDA to create housing or employment opportunities for local people within the new developments was heavily criticised by the Docklands communities:

“...I know in Sheriff Street and in around Seán McDermott Street and Amiens Street, there was a lot of conflict, in the way that whole thing was set up. They basically barred people out of the place, you know, there were no jobs in it, there was nothing...” (Community Liaison Committee member C)

In response to community pressure, the CHDDA established a Community Liaison Committee, comprising invited community activists, to represent the interests of the indigenous Docklands communities in the process of regeneration.

“...those in around the IFSC when it was being built and unemployment being so high were getting nothing out of it...So, that’s when the big lobby came on to say...it should be inclusive. That if there’s jobs going, there should be a certain amount of jobs locally. But, no-one would ever put that down on paper...I really don’t know what the argument was, why or how or whatever. But, they just wouldn’t put it down on paper. They reckoned it could have been classed as being biased...for one group set against another...But they fought that fight and, eventually, there was a...Community Liaison Committee, a CLC, set up by CHDDA to consult and to inform the local communities on what was happening within the IFSC...And basically it was made up of major powerbrokers. Community leaders are powerbrokers in and around the community so they were chosen because of the power they supposedly had within communities. And that to me was probably, you know, a mistake but how and ever...it led to good things.” (Community Liaison Committee member C)

However, this non-elected Community Liaison Committee was widely viewed by the community as simply a sop to the community and a vehicle for smoothing the way for economic regeneration:

“There was a Community Liaison Committee but it never, ever really translated into community gain for the people over there.” (Community Liaison Committee member A)

The community activists included on the Community Liaison Committee had no power, other than to make sure that the community’s views were heard by the decision-makers. It was felt that the committee was used as a vehicle to progress proposals by defusing conflict and protests:

“...with the CHDDA situation, the community group had no power at all. They were invited in and they were listened to and if something could be done, it probably would be done. If something couldn’t be done, it wasn’t. But also what it was there for as well was to...deflect any arguments that may come up. Because they would have their arguments at the table and probably diffuse stuff happening before it really got to any stage at all, which sometimes is not a bad thing but at other times it can be because sometimes local community groups need to hold things close to their chest. Especially if they’re going to protest and a protest, a meaningful protest, they need to hold it close. But sometimes, with the likes of them small groups, is them things slip and the developers or the organisation you’re going to protest against gets the information and is well prepared for whatever happens afterwards... The situation at that time was, there was a lot of street protest because people weren’t being listened to.” (Community Liaison Committee member C)

One of the Community Liaison Committee’s achievements was to persuade the CHDDA to pioneer a local employment scheme, through a new apprenticeship programme. This was not very successful, as none of the participants finished their apprenticeships, although this was not entirely the fault of the programme:

“...when the CLC group of CHDDA was set up, it...helped because they got in some forms of local employment. There was an apprentice programme set up. Now, people will say that apprentice programme didn’t work at all...and anyone that was there at the time never served out their apprenticeships and as soon as the contract was over in the IFSC, the apprentices were let go and that was it, everything was back to normal. Now, there were reasons in and around that. That a lot of the young people in the inner city at that time wouldn’t move out of the inner city for a job. I mean, if someone said there was a job in Tallaght, they thought you were going, you know, fifty mile away and you’d never get home again...Or if they were offered a job in Ringsend even...that wouldn’t - Because it was not their area and they didn’t like it. They had to be in their area, which was, kind of, an educational thing that had to happen over a period of time. But, that’s part of the reason how a lot of the jobs...fell through. Not all of the reason, but I’d say a fair part of it.” (Community Liaison Committee member C)

The Dublin Docklands Development Authority (DDDA)

When the Custom House Docks Development Authority (CHDDA) had been in existence for ten years, a new Authority took over its functions. Established under the *Dublin Docklands Development Authority Act* of 1997, this Authority covered a much larger area, extending to 526 hectares on both sides of the River Liffey. The Dublin Docklands Development Authority (DDDA) was responsible for the sustainable social, economic and physical regeneration of the Docklands, in addition to the continued development of the financial sector of the economy. It was required to prepare a master plan for achieving these objectives over a ten- to fifteen-year time horizon (DDDA, 2003).

Opportunities for Community Participation

The *Master Plan* for the Docklands, which was published in 1997 and is reviewed every five years, is underpinned by a similar statutory consultation process to the city development plan. The DDDA is required to advertise the Draft Master Plan, put it on display and invite submissions from the public. The broad provisions of the master plan must then be reflected in the city development plan, which is subject to a separate consultation process. The DDDA also has the power to formulate area action plans and S.25 planning schemes, with opportunities for the community representatives on the DDDA Council and the general public to have an input.

Three S.25 planning schemes have been introduced to date, the Grand Canal Dock Planning Scheme (2000), the Docklands North Lotts Planning Scheme (2002) and the Custom House Dock Planning Scheme. Planning schemes are similar to local area plans, covering issues such as land-use, residential densities, building heights, plot ratios and so on. However, they are very prescriptive as they are in effect outline planning permissions. Any proposed development deemed to comply with the planning scheme is exempted development. This fast-track planning system means that there is no third party right of appeal in areas covered by planning schemes. Third party input is limited to submissions from the seven community representatives on the DDDA council and the general public when the draft planning scheme is put on public display for one month:

“...in effect, this is a very detailed local area plan but it’s more than a local area plan. In effect, it’s an outline planning permission. And the Authority prepares...a draft planning scheme and places it on public display. And that planning scheme will outline such things as the nature of distribution of the uses, density, plot ratio, parking, height etc. and provision for amenities and open space and conservation. And it’s relatively prescriptive because it has to be because in effect it’s an outline planning permission. It’s Section 25. And if that planning scheme is approved by the Minister, well then any development which is in compliance with that planning scheme is exempted development for the purposes of the planning acts and there is no third party right of appeal. Now, the third party input, the community input comes when the actual planning scheme itself is being prepared and drafted. So first of all, the draft will be prepared by the executive and it will go to the Council who will then also have an input. It will also be put on public display for a month and the public can have their input. And also it has to be referred to the City Council. All those comments will be taken onboard and put back to our own Council. And then we submit that to the Minister for approval and an environmental impact statement has to be prepared for a planning scheme. And then the Minister either approves, rejects or can approve, I suppose, with amendments. So! And then thereafter, any applications which come in to us, there’s no third party rights of observation on them. And this allows for us to put in place a fast track planning system.” (DDDA official)

While this fast track planning might appear to prejudice the rights of the local communities to object to developments that would adversely affect their areas, a DDDA planner argued that great care is taken to avoid the selection of sites adjacent to residential communities:

“In terms of actually selecting areas that are suitable for planning schemes, we’re very conscious of the fact that there may be a perception that third party rights are prejudiced with a planning scheme, on individual aspects of the actual planning scheme itself. So, the criteria for the areas selected for a new planning scheme are relatively strict...and there’s five

criteria. The first one is the extent of need for redevelopment by reason of obsolescence of vacant land, under-utilisation or dereliction. So, we've experienced that on either side of the river and also down in Poolbeg. Also, the issue of whether there are significant barriers to investment or re-development by virtue of contamination or lack of infrastructure. This can often be a deterrent for developers to invest, if there's a lack of infrastructure. Or, if land is horribly contaminated, it's prohibitively expensive to develop. Now the third point would be probably of particular interest to you, is the extent of isolation from immediate established third party interests, such as neighbouring residential developments. So, while there are other areas which have development potential other than the ones identified in the Master Plan, for example, maybe in City Quay, Westland Row, those development sites are cheek by jowl with adjoining residential properties. And the planning scheme, as a tool, may not be the most appropriate tool by which to facilitate development in those particular areas. So, the areas that we have selected, there are large tracts of brown-field development lands, with few houses in them, or they're relatively well segregated from existing communities within the Docklands." (DDDA official)

In contrast to some of the other plans included in this research, particularly the Liberties / Coombe Integrated Area Plan, the Master Plan for the Docklands is quite 'broad brush' in content. The Master Plan comprised broad strategic policies, while area action plans and S.25 planning schemes include more detailed design specifications, such as residential densities and building heights:

"That's a strategic document [the Master Plan], which sets the broad policies in relation to social, economic and physical regeneration of the area. It sets the broad objectives in relation to land use, residential development, commercial development and other objectives, including road objectives and transportation objectives and conservation objectives, all that sort of stuff. And indicated...firm locations for open space etc. The detailed planning framework for development within the area is then reflected in our statutory planning schemes and area action plans. So the, sort of, the specific issue of density and heights for the most part is then reflected in the planning schemes." (DDDA official)

A DDDA planner's assertion that the design specifications in area action plans and S.25 planning schemes are viewed by the DDDA as a 'contract with the community' provided a further contrast with the experience in the south-west inner city:

"We would be very much of the view that a local area plan is a contract with the local community and a planning scheme is a contract." (DDDA official)

Community Reaction to the Establishment of the DDDA

The establishment of the new Authority was broadly welcomed by the community, as the social regeneration of the Docklands was being promoted for the first time:

"...when the Financial Services Centre was completed, it was decided to redevelop all of Docklands, rather than just that 27-acre site...there had been lengthy discussions about the Urban Renewal Act. Particularly the tax incentives for property development were encouraging, basically, redevelopments of slums because there was no quality control. Organisations like [named property development company] were slapping up wafer-thin dog boxes throughout the inner city and charging substantial amounts of money for them...they then decided to form a new authority that would have responsibility of developing all of the Docklands. That's how the Dublin Docklands Development Authority was established. But even more importantly, it was established with a different remit. Their remit was to ensure the social and economic regeneration of the Docklands area. So, that changed the whole picture because they then did have responsibility for social development, as opposed to just physical development, as had been the case in the past." (Community Liaison Committee member B)

"...the DDDA is different [to the CHDDA] because, built into the masterplan - the social agenda is very much built into the fabric of the masterplan, which is protected through legalisation." (Community Liaison Committee member A)

The inclusion of seven community representatives on the 27-member Council of the Dublin Docklands Development Authority was seen as a huge shift towards facilitating community participation in decision-making:

“There was a new Labour government looking at the area and the decline. And having the vision that the Dockland area would take-off and that it couldn’t happen unless you had local people involved, it couldn’t happen successfully unless you had local people involved. And so, for the first time I’d say in the history of this State, we have seven local people from Docklands, community activists, who are involved at the decision-making table, at the Council table. So, that was revolutionary even.” (Community Liaison Committee member A)

However, the selection of the seven community representatives did not seem transparent or fully democratic. Although they were nominated by local community groups, they were selected and appointed by the Minister.

“...when CHDDA then...rolled into the Dublin Docklands Development Authority, the CLC of that had to expand. Now as I said, the CLC of CHDDA was a group that was chosen, basically, by the Custom House Docks Development Authority. When the Docklands Development Authority was being set up, I think that some people were being primed to go onto the new CLC of the Custom House Development Authority. And I was invited, with...two or three others, to sit in on a CHDDA CLC meeting. And when I came out of it, I said ‘Why was I invited to that?’ and then I...started thinking ‘Well, someone’s priming someone’...So that there’ll be a transition when the south-side communities come in into the Custom House, that...everything will be fine, we’d have a kind of a ready-made CLC. And I didn’t like it at all. But! And I spoke to some of the representatives on CHDDA and they weren’t happy with the way it went either...So, I said ‘Fine...We’ll just have to look at it when it comes back again...We have a Council, which is made up of 27 members and it’s made up of Government, local authority, community and business. So, a whole diverse bunch of people in around a table. But anyway, community groups wrote to or submitted to the Minister names that they thought would be their representatives. And I suppose the stronger you were within a community, the more people or the more groups you could get to write in on your behalf.” (Community Liaison Committee member C)

“They have an Executive Board and a Council. There are 27 people on the Council...There are six or seven people on the Executive Board, who are direct Government appointees. And then the Council, which is I think 27 people, are nominated appointees by the Minister, on basis of recommendations by named organisations. Now, there are I think 78 nominating community organisations. In other words, organisations who are entitled to present a name to the Minister and then he decides who to appoint.” (Community Liaison Committee member B)

In common with its predecessor, the DDDA also established a Community Liaison Committee (CLC), the functions of which are as follows:

“...to maximise the involvement of the communities in the local areas in the re-development of Docklands; to provide a forum for direct communications between the Authority, developers and representatives of the local communities and vice versa; and to maximise suitable employment and training opportunities for people from the local area who are unemployed.” (DDDA, 2003, 21)

This Community Liaison Committee gave the community another means of influencing decision-making, through the DDDA’s Executive Board:

“...we get the seven community representatives on the Docklands Council. They also meet as a group, under the title of the Community Liaison Committee, ok. And that’s chaired by a member of the Executive Board so, as well as having an input onto the Council, we can have a direct, second-hand if you like, input into the Executive Board.” (Community Liaison Committee member B)

However, its membership was limited to the same seven community representatives. One respondent argued that the Community Liaison Committee would have been more effective with a wider membership:

“At the Council, it was proposed that a Community Liaison Committee be set up for the Docklands Authority and the community representatives would sit down and see how best that could work...So, we all sat around the table and I can remember it well and there was an argument around who should sit and who shouldn't sit. And a lot of people wanted to hold it to themselves, that the people who were at the table should be the CLC and no-one else, no outsiders should come in. And I think that suited the Authority, as well. I think it was a wrong move. I think there should be a CLC outside of the Council because I think the community representatives on the Council...it would put more pressure on them...to work...towards the community's perspective. It would also be a good reporting instrument, to report back to. It would also be good feedback from the CLC to the community reps on the Council, on what was happening outside. Because you can never get around everyone that's outside. But, that was beaten and the community reps on the Council were the CLC. So, it was a kind of sub-committee to the Council. I think it was a big mistake but how and ever...it's there. Again, it works to a degree but I reckon it would have worked a lot better if it had have been...even a mix of...Council members and outside representation as well. It would have made the community groups, I think, a lot stronger. But, certain members didn't want any others coming in and stepping on their patch...Or they felt that if others...came in, that it would kind of totally mix the whole thing up and...the work wouldn't be done and that could have been a factor as well. I could be totally wrong but that was my view at the time.” (Community Liaison Committee member C)

Community Priorities

The community representatives on the DDDA Board identified education, employment and housing as their three priorities for action during the regeneration of the Docklands. Intensive lobbying for measures in these fields to be included in the Master Plan followed:

“...in the first Master Plan we sat at the table and the community representatives sat together and we said 'Well ok, what do we want from the Master Plan? What are our priorities within the Master Plan?' and everyone had a different priority. Education, employment, and housing were the three main priorities. So, we said we wouldn't sign-off on the Master Plan, unless these three things were written in stone within the Master Plan and there was a...benchmark that we could see that these things were being done.” (Community Liaison Committee member C)

The community representatives found it difficult at times to influence the content of the Master Plan, particularly with regard to measures that could affect the attractiveness of the Docklands for a developer. Several references were made to 'arguments' and 'debates', some of which seemed to have been quite heated and culminated in community representatives leaving meetings in disgust on at least one occasion. While agreement was reached quite easily with regard to the measures to be implemented in the education field, housing and employment proved much more contentious. The community representatives on the DDDA Council argued vociferously to secure a 20% social and affordable housing clause and a 20% local labour clause in the Master Plan. The DDDA was reluctant to acquiesce to the community representatives' demand for 20% social and affordable housing, due to concerns regarding the financial attractiveness of the Docklands for development:

“Education, there was no argument. It was given, “Yeah...that's fine'. 20% social and affordable [housing] was an argument and we argued and thrashed it and battered it and threw it all over the place. And the argument on the table with business people and everyone else was that, if we were to force developers to give us 20%, developers wouldn't develop, they wouldn't move in. There would be no development. So! And everything else that we wanted, education, jobs, all the other stuff that comes along with development wouldn't happen because there would be no money to develop all the rest of the other stuff. And we didn't budge, we said 'No...We're not signing off'. The only power we had was to sign-off the

Master Plan...we knew we had power, that the Master Plan could go nowhere unless everyone agreed to sign it off.” (Community Liaison Committee member C)

Presumably, a similar rationale underpinned the DDDA’s reluctance to include a 20% local labour clause in the Master Plan. It was argued that it would not be viable on several grounds, although the DDDA was unable to substantiate any of its claims:

“Then the 20% labour, local employment was the other argument then. And that argument went on and on and on. And that was the last argument we had, before the Master Plan was signed-off. And they threw up legal argument, they threw up EU law, they threw up everything else, to say why it couldn’t be done. But, no-one showed us a piece of paper that said, you know, legally this is the piece of paper that says you can’t do it or whatever. So at the end, we said ‘Look...you give us the paper that says in EU law that you can’t do it or give us the paper in Irish law that says you can’t do it. Show it to us written down and we can then go back to our communities and say ‘Look, the reason we couldn’t get the 20% is because of A, B and C’. And we’ll go off and lobby Government or whatever to get that changed”. But, they couldn’t show us anything. So the 20% local employment charter was brought in. And then, we needed a way to monitor the 20% so a Local Labour Liaison Officer was employed then by the Authority to do that. And I think we’re up around the - it averages around 21% local employment, which is not bad.” (Community Liaison Committee member C)

The community representatives’ efforts during the process of formulating the Master Plan were eventually rewarded. A forerunner of Part V of the *Planning and Development Act, 2000*, the agreed Master Plan stipulated that 20% of the housing units constructed under the Master Plan would be given over to social or affordable housing. Under the local employment charter included in the Master Plan, 20% of the employment created must be given to local people:

“It is a Master Plan policy that 20% of new residential units with the overall Area be allocated for social and affordable housing, representing between 1,600 and 2,200 units.” (DDDA, 2003, 41)

“The policy of the Dublin Docklands Development Authority is that 20% of new jobs created in the docklands will be on offer to residents of the docklands in the first instance and thereafter in its hinterland. This proportion can be divided into full-time jobs and apprenticeships. The Dublin Docklands Development Authority accepts that this policy is dependent on the availability of appropriate skills in the area. The Authority will work to provide the necessary training and education to rectify identified skills shortages.” (DDDA, 2003, 103)

The community representatives were ultimately very happy with the provisions of the Master Plan. The DDDA was seen as reaching out to the community through its housing, employment and education programmes:

“...seven-and-a-half years ago, the Dublin Dockland Development Authority was set up and everything just took off from there: 20% social / affordable housing, 20% local labour clause, education programmes across the board - right the way up, scholarship programmes, schools, business placement programmes. So at this stage now, we have nearly 200 young people working in financial services through the Docklands...So, very exciting, programmes looking at different types of things, impacting on the school kids and looking at emotional intelligence programmes and training for teachers...like behavioural training. All of that’s very exciting. It really has reached out to the community, the Authority.” (Community Liaison Committee member A)

Although the measures implemented were seen as extremely successful, the delivery of the social agenda was seen as an on-going challenge:

“Well, it’s working. As I say, there are many, many diverse education programmes, very, very successful. We won’t see the fruits of them for another few years. The housing again will deliver housing to Docklanders; over and above the needs of Docklanders, maybe...On the

other hand, the housing in Docklands is not confined to Docklanders. The allocations come from the City Council. They have the housing list but we would be fighting to ensure that Docklanders get priority. That's working as well. It's not policy but it's working and we can do it in a discreet way because they all have to come from the housing list anyway. And the other area is the employment. As I say, the employment in certain areas is working very well but there is a pool of people not benefiting from that. As I say, we now have 200 very young people working in financial services, which is what's coming, down the road. But, the pool of people we have, like the mid-forties, they're our clients. Our target group are the long-term unemployed and those in danger of becoming long-term unemployed. Now, it's my job to ensure that those people don't fall out of the net, that there is gain there for them too. So, it challenges all the time...It's not a 'Sit down and now pat yourself on the back' thing. It's an on-going challenge, to ensure that the social agenda is delivered." (Community Liaison Committee member A)

The implementation of the 20% local employment clause and the 20% social and affordable housing clause proved particularly problematic in several respects. With regard to the 20% local employment clause, the necessary skills base was not available within the community to provide 20% of skilled workers for either construction work or the companies establishing in the Docklands:

"Now, the delivery of those! As the fella says, the devil is in the detail. On the 20% local labour has been somewhat problematic. Mainly because we can't deliver on our end of the 20% because we don't have the skills base or the educational levels. So, we have no problem getting 20% - in fact at the moment, we have 28% - of the labouring jobs on the building side, the general operatives jobs. Now, there's no such thing as an unskilled labourer any more, you know. And the construction industry is completely dominated by sub-contracting. So, it's not as if you're dealing with a developer who's hiring 1,000 men to build something. The developer doesn't hire anybody, sub-contractors hire ten plumbers, six carpenters, twenty glaziers. So, imposing it on them is the difficulty. But, we never had 20% of the plumbers necessary, we didn't have 20% of the electricians, we didn't have 20% of the carpenters. We certainly have 20% of the security men, we certainly have 20% of the labourers, right. So, that was a problem that, whereas there's a strong commitment to the local labour clause, you can't force anybody to employ someone who doesn't have the skills to do what they need done...If you have Mickey Mouse qualifications, you get Mickey Mouse work! And it's inevitable, that's inevitable...we negotiated for instance with [named banking corporation], when they moved in there. They were looking for four honours in the Leaving and we negotiated an opening for local people who didn't have the Leaving Cert, that it would be done on the basis of interview. But, it was a bit of a sop really because almost none of them got jobs...What a Leaving Cert tells to a bank, it's not that you have what knowledge that they need because you don't! Leaving Cert gives you no knowledge that a bank needs. What it proves to the bank is that you can handle complex material, that you're motivated, that you can get up in the morning. Because you don't get a Leaving Cert without going to school, getting up, studying, you know what I mean. So, it's the more generic skills that it proves to them initially so then you're a much more attractive bet. But, the other thing is that a lot of the local young people who went for the interviews were completely intimidated by the experience, you know...Well, what they did was, they gave them a telephone and said 'This is an irate customer from Germany, who's had £3000 overcharged on his credit card. Deal with him!' This guy in broken English kicking up fucking murder about his bank account! Some of the kids came back crying...It was a scam. But anyway, having said that, we've subsequently developed a reasonably good working relationship with some of the companies down there, including [named banking corporation]. But, it was and is difficult to deliver the local labour clause, on very low levels of educational achievement and skills base." (Community Liaison Committee member B)

The community welcomed the inclusion of the 20% social and affordable housing clause in the Master Plan:

"It's coming to fruition now. Before the end of this year, well over 1,000 social apartments will be made available in Docklands. The plan overall is that 11,500 apartments will be built and 20% of that, our whack of that is over 2,000 apartments, 2,100 apartments. We don't have

2,100 people on the waiting list in the Docklands area. So, the Authority will be a net contributor to the housing stock. So, we're very proud of that." (Community Liaison Committee member B)

However, its implementation also proved contentious at times. A lack of clarity in the Master Plan, stemming from its 'broad-brush' nature, led to several disputes. It took some time to reach agreement with regard to the type of housing to be provided and the proportion assigned to social-rented vis-à-vis affordable housing. The announcement of the 20% social and affordable housing clause in the Master Plan prior to the finalisation of these important details greatly angered the community:

"...We had got the 20% [social and affordable housing] but we hadn't decided on how 20% would be rolled out...what type of housing...would be built? What would be the mix? Who would own them?...City Council were trying to get out of managing housing, who was going to do all this?...This was something that they were ramming through and I said 'No'...There was an emergency meeting called at 8.30 the next morning. And we were all brought in to the table again and there was a lot of shouting and roaring and whatever...I didn't like this. And then, it was announced that the Minister was coming in at 11.30 that morning...So, I said 'This is an absolute disgrace and I want it minuted that I'm against it. Blah, blah, blah'. And that was that, you know. So, the Minister came in and announced it...But that was the 20%, which we got but wasn't right, as far as I was concerned." (Community Liaison Committee member C)

Several years later, debate is still continuing regarding the long-term management of the social-rented units. Serious misgivings regarding housing association ownership and management of the social-rented housing stock in the Docklands have led the community to lobby for the establishment of a tenant-controlled housing trust:

"In fact, none of us signed-off on the 20% because it was just done. We didn't even say 'Yes, it's ok'...they went away and done it anyway. So, none of us signed up to it. And I argued at the table about the 20% social and affordable and how it was going to be managed and who was going to manage it and where would the profits go and what would stop someone from coming in and upping rents beyond people's -...all this type of stuff. And the arguments were coming back that they were charitable organisations, that they couldn't do that, that they were set by certain rules. And I said 'Yeah but rules change and...in ten years' time or in twenty years' time, charitable organisations may not have the same rules as were set'...Rules can change! So, these arguments went on and eventually we got around to this, that they will own it eventually and this set alarm bells ringing everywhere." (Community Liaison Committee member C)

"There are no regulations as to how housing agencies operate. None! There's regulations as to how they're formed but not how they operate. There's no service level agreement. They don't have to stick to any of the promises that they made about either the rent or the service charges. They can basically do what they want. They can force people out with arbitrary decisions about rent and service charges. And in twenty years, not only will they be collecting rents for twenty years, but they will then own them. Where would you get a deal like that?...So, what we're saying now is we want to form our own housing trust and we want all of the 20% in Docklands vested in that trust. And let the trust hold on to it, until the people who live in it are able to run the housing complex themselves. And then, if you're giving it to anybody, you give it to them!" (Community Liaison Committee member B)

Management contracts for the new social-rented housing stock have been limited to five years, with a view to capacity-building among the tenants and the establishment of a tenant-controlled housing trust:

"...there's 1,000 apartments to come on place, at least 1,000 this year, before the end of the year. And they [the DDDA] have now agreed that the management contracts to housing associations will be limited to three to five years in duration...The purpose will be that, during that three to five year period, you develop the residents into a stage where they can manage

their own housing. And that means people being trained in...how to manage money, committee skills, how to stick to corporate governance, dealing with staff, paid staff...the responsibilities of being an employer for many of these people for the first time...You mightn't feel like an employer but, under the law, you are an employer if you're on the management committee: this person works for you, you're the employer, each member of the committee is the employer. So, that's quite new to a lot of our people...But, some of the models we've looked at, they've done it very, very successfully, you know. So, we'd be confident of that. So, they've agreed that they will limit, in the immediate to short-term, management contracts, service management contracts. And the...the legal ownership of the properties will remain in this, hopefully, in this community housing trust, until the people themselves are in a position to be able to run their own affairs. So, that's the state of play on that one.” (Community Liaison Committee member B)

“The housing associations will be taken on but they're given a five-year term...It's not worked out but the idea will be that they train up the residents, to take over the ownership of the apartments. And a housing trust will be set up, to oversee all of the housing within Docklands and made up of local people on the trust and they will be set by certain rules and regulations. They'll be like a regulatory body, basically, to make sure that the housing associations are living up to what they said they would do and when they hand it over to the locals...they can't just hand it over to someone and say 'Well ok, it's yours now, away you go'. There's a whole training process that has to be gone through...estate management and all that type of stuff, proper training.” (Community Liaison Committee member C)

Several practical issues also arose with regard to the implementation of the 20% social and affordable housing clause. The issue of 'pepper-potting' the social and affordable apartments among the private apartments within the same blocks gave rise to considerable debate. The argument that social and affordable housing should not be segregated with a view to achieving a social mix had to be balanced against the implications for management and service charges and also conflicting lifestyles.

Developers would generally prefer to provide the 20% social housing separately for the purpose of marketing 'exclusive' apartment complexes. To this end, some developed 'luxury housing' and negotiated the provision of the 20% social-rented apartments in separate blocks, giving rise to considerable friction within the community:

“...one of the things that the developers did to try to get around the social housing...was the [named property development consortium] said they were building luxury housing. And what they meant by luxury housing was housing with bathrooms with TVs built into the wall. In the bathroom! Do you know, this kind of nonsense stuff. Very, very up-market housing. That created an immediate dilemma for us because we were entitled to the 20%, no matter what the housing was like, so we demanded the 20%. The Executive Board subsequently agreed not to insist on the 20% in that scheme, in return for 24% around the corner, still on the Spencer Dock site. What that gave us was nineteen extra apartments. Now, they were moving away from the principle in doing that and there's people still giving out about it. But, the people who give out about it most...are people who don't have the responsibility for the prudent use of taxpayers' money. I cannot honestly say that I could stand in front of the Public Accounts Committee and say that it was a prudent use of taxpayers' money, to spend a half-a-million housing one family in a luxury development in the Spencer Dock, when we could house two families for that kind of money...I mean, we stuck to our principle and we said we wanted 20% but I wasn't surprised when the Executive Board...said 'No, we're taking this deal they're offering, which is nineteen extra flats, for leaving the millionaires there and the social housing with the market housing'. Now, market housing, it's housing that people will pay good money for but it's not luxury housing. So, that row was on-going...” (Community Liaison Committee member B)

Considerable friction within some apartment complexes with a 'good social mix' has resulted from conflict between the lifestyles of the predominantly young and child-free owners and tenants of private apartments and those of the predominantly family-oriented social housing tenants:

"The mechanisms of delivering it have been problematic, in terms more of the management of the housing. And there's a contrast...between what social housing in a family context needs and what private development needs. For instance, families want a place that's quiet at the evening because the kids are going to bed, that there's somewhere for them to play. Not look out at a fancy garden! Something that they can fucking play in, slide on, kick a ball around, that's what they want. Whereas the private owners, they don't want any noise, they don't want any kids. A lot of them are young people, they want to bop till dawn, they want to play loud fucking music late at night, all this kind of stuff. So, there are tensions there and working out some of those tensions can be problematic. The first scheme was Clarion Quay. There were mistakes made on that and we're determined that those mistakes won't be made again." (Community Liaison Committee member B)

Despite these difficulties in implementing the Master Plan, all of the community representatives interviewed emphasised the progress made under the education, employment and housing programmes. The DDDA's Community Projects Development Initiative, to which community groups can apply for capital grants, was also highlighted:

"We...issue €750,000 in grants every year, through the Community Projects Development Initiative. That's capital funding that people can't get anywhere else. And that pays for everything from football jerseys to new buildings, computers, minibuses, all sorts of things...So that's €750,000 a year and then, of course, the Authority has a substantial marketing strategy and a huge educational budget...And the marketing strategy can be used for all sorts of things, including...making the place look nicer." (Community Liaison Committee member B)

"...they also have a very successful funding programme. It's called CPDI, Community Projects Development Initiative, whereby community groups can apply annually for funding for infrastructure, capital programmes. This place has been refurbished through funding from Docklands. All these new machines, state of the art stuff, funded through grants from Docklands. Our training centre upstairs again has been fully upgraded and state of the art technology, through funding from Docklands. We also have a house with three apartments in it, which we've had for thirty-odd years, 35 years, which was to help people on the ladder, to get on the ladder, the housing ladder. They get a two-year lease and then, the rent they pay, some of that's saved for them and then they get a lump sum when their lease is up. That building has been fully modernised, with funding from the CDPI. And that's available to all Dockland organisations." (Community Liaison Committee member A)

Overview of the Community's Experience of Participation

To varying extents, each of the three community representatives felt that the DDDA does try to encourage community participation:

"Very much so, yeah [the DDDA encourages community participation]. Like, any of the planning applications will be on display in all the communities, encouraging people to have an input into it. There are lots of social activities, community festivals, talent competitions, photographic competition for young school kids, there's lots of stuff...at the level of the community." (Community Liaison Committee member A)

"I think it [the DDDA] is [trying to encourage community participation], yeah. I mean, they recognise a need for it. They're of course, trying to keep everybody sweet." (Community Liaison Committee member B)

"Yes, it [the DDDA] does [try to encourage community participation]. But, sometimes it tries to do it the way they want to do it not the way...Participation kind of goes both ways. Sometimes they don't listen. So, we're at the table and we are participating but they may come up with - Just take the housing thing, 'Look, it's wrong, we're not doing it right, we should be doing it this way.'" (Community Liaison Committee member C)

In terms of enabling community participation, DDDA officials seemed to make strong efforts to ensure that the seven community representatives could participate fully in meetings of the

DDDA Council. The community representatives felt that the maps and plans shown at meetings were generally accessible to people without specialist knowledge:

“They go out of their way. They put them up [maps], when they’re explaining it to the Council, they have them in coloured and identifying all the different functions. Ah yeah, they’re easy to understand on that level, alright” (Community Liaison Committee member B)

Initially, the community representatives had difficulties in understanding some architectural and construction terms used in plans. The inclusion of a glossary of specialist terms at the end of each document was requested and the DDDA was very co-operative in this regard:

“Now they [plans and proposals] are [clear and easy to understand]. At the beginning, they weren’t because there was a lot of terms...in it, architectural terms and building terms, that we knew nothing. Everything they give us now, there’s a glossary at the back, that explains what a word means and we asked for that ourselves. A lot of people said we shouldn’t because we’d be looking very foolish. But, I said to them ‘How do you -’. I mean architects understand these things...It would be like someone coming in here and me starting to talk to them about ships and parts of ships and all sorts of things. You wouldn’t have a clue...and it’s the same as me going in and talking to a developer or a builder and him throwing all these terms out to me, I haven’t got a clue. ‘Give me explanations in the back and I’ll be fine’. And that’s what we do. So, any planning schemes that come out, we’ll get a glossary in the back, explaining the different types of words...And in all fairness, there was no problem with it at all. They said ‘Yeah’ and it was a bit more work for them to do. Maybe the first time it is and after that then, it becomes easy...” (Community Liaison Committee member C)

Plans and proposals were not always initially explained in a very accessible manner at DDDA Council meetings. However, plenty of time was allowed for the questioning of officials and consultants:

“No [plans and proposals are not clearly explained at Council meetings]. Well, they’ll explain it and then you can ask them in lay terms because you’re given plenty of time to do that.” (Community Liaison Committee member C)

Finally, a fully funded regeneration conference for community groups is organised every year, which was seen as highly beneficial in promoting community participation and building consensus between the different Docklands communities:

“There’s an annual regeneration conference in Killarney, which is owned by the community. It’s facilitated by the community leaders, we chair the sessions, we give the feedback. So, community people have an opportunity to raise the issues that they’re concerned about.” (Community Liaison Committee member A)

“We have a social regeneration conference every year, which we go to Killarney for. And the idea behind that is to get people out of the fucking area and let them get to know each other in a, kind of, a less confrontational environment. Now, we have loads of rows and arguments at the conference. But, the people that you’re having the rows and arguments with, you have a pint with them that evening if you’re into having pints or you have dinner, you’re sitting beside them over dinner or whatever, you know. You get to know them as people, rather than as numbers. So, all of the community organisations are invited to send representatives to that.” (Community Liaison Committee member B)

With regard to the outcome of community input to the decision-making process, the community representatives on the DDDA Council felt that the views and concerns expressed by the community were given proper consideration by the DDDA, although this did not necessarily mean that the community always prevailed:

“I think it’s taken seriously because they have to take it seriously because we jump up and down like lunatics if they don’t take it seriously. But, it doesn’t necessarily mean that we always win. But, I think our comments are taken seriously, yeah. I mean, if they can’t keep us

sweet, they've no hope of keeping the general public sweet." (Community Liaison Committee member B)

"...you'd be taken seriously, yeah. Very seriously, yeah. But you win some, you lose some. Now for instance, you know the block that's over there, on the corner of the gas company site? Well when that was first looked at, the plans were drawn up, there were to be office blocks on that corner, coming up Macken Street and up to the bridge, which would have closed that whole complex off from us. It would have created a separate community over there. And we said 'No!'. We wanted housing on the street, to be a visible expansion of our community because we'd been shrinking, shrinking. So, housing as a physical expansion and bring life where there was never life because it was the gas company first and then it was derelict. And now there'll be life, there'll be people. Own hall doors on the street as well as the apartments. There'll be duplexes on the street so you'll have life on the street. So, that's one thing we would have been very clear on. Many, many other things we would raise. Yes, we'd be taken very seriously. But, that also demands a responsibility on our behalf, to do our business in a proper manner, a respectful manner and a constructive manner." (Community Liaison Committee member A)

"Yeah, I think they do [take the community's views and concerns seriously]. Not to say that they take on what we say. They take us seriously now. They know that we're a strong group and...if we say something, we mean it. Yeah, I think they do take us seriously." (Community Liaison Committee member C)

The community representatives rated their success highly and felt that their representation on the Council of the DDDA had had a strong influence on outcomes:

"It would have been something different without us being there, I can assure you. It would have been completely different without our engagement...[I would rate the community's success] Very highly, very highly. There's loads to be done, you know. But, I think the thing is on a sound footing, it's going to work. It was never going to be easy. There was always going to be problems and there are still problems to go. We're on the eighth year now of a fifteen-year programme. But, we're quite pleased with the progress that's been made. I mean, we've been looking at the unemployment and the dereliction down there since the bleeding sixties...and that was no good to anybody. And there's little enough down there worth saving. I mean, there's some of the industrial fabric worth maintaining, not so much for old times' sake as for cultural and historical reasons. But other than that, it was a fucking wasteland...Nothing happening there...we're trying to create vibrant communities. We're building 12,000 apartments, we're bringing in 40,000 extra people. And we're building, we're creating a whole new city quarter. And I think it's the first time in history that a whole new city quarter is being built with a social objective and with the participation of the people who live there. And that's progress! That's bloody progress! When you consider in 1978, the Corporation thought all they had to do was fucking throw us all out, level the area and build office blocks on it, you know. Them days are gone!" (Community Liaison Committee member B)

Barriers to Community Participation

Despite the general perception that the DDDA does try to promote community participation and that community representation on the DDDA Council had been successful, several barriers to effective community participation in the decision-making process emerged. These barriers included overcoming negative past experiences of dealing with state agencies, ascertaining the commercial viability of 'community gain' measures, a slight tendency to over-value professional expertise at the expense of local knowledge and a marked inequality in the distribution of power between the various stakeholders represented on the Council of the DDDA.

There was limited interest within the community in participating in the initial formulation of the Master Plan, largely due to past experience with the CHDDA. Many people would not participate because they felt that the DDDA was just paying 'lip service' to community participation. However, some community activists did spend a lot of time on submissions and were happy with the result:

“...everyone thought then that this would be lip service again. That...the Government authority were going to come out and say they were listening but really they won’t...So, that whole consultation process went on a road show for months...Well, at the beginning, people started to attend meetings and coming near the end, people weren’t too interested really...They would come along and have a look...There wasn’t really that much of an interest in what was going on...A few, I suppose what you’d call community leaders, took interest in it. That they could see that this was going to be huge changes to the indigenous community that was going to be there...The impact was going to be totally - nothing that had ever seen before. And if we didn’t get some kind of a foothold or a say in what was going to happen, those communities would have been devastated. So, a lot of us kept at it and...spent a long, long time in putting in proposals to the Master Plan. And it was hard work because it wasn’t an expertise that I was - I mean, I can tell you what should be for the area but articulate it down on paper, in the way that planners put it down, I couldn’t do that...All of us, we couldn’t do it. So! Well I suppose, the fight was going on and the debate was going on about Docklands and, you know, where it was going and whatever. And a lot of the stuff that was in the Master Plan at the time, unemployment, housing, education, community infrastructure, all of that stuff was being washed about everywhere...And when the Master Plan came out, I thought that [named architect] did a very good job of putting that Master Plan together.” (Community Liaison Committee member C)

“...the Master Plan for the Docklands came out and the consultation process that went around that, I thought was pretty good. A lot of people felt they shouldn’t or wouldn’t engage because it was all an exercise really. That a government agency basically were coming out to pay lip service...say they’ll listen but really the developers will be the ones that will win out in the end.” (Community Liaison Committee member C)

The community representatives recognised that their participation was taking place within a commercial framework and felt that their role was to maximise the benefits accruing to the community from investment in the Docklands:

“...we realised that we couldn’t do everything, we couldn’t solve all the problems and we couldn’t dictate all the terms either...We also realised that, if this thing was going to work, it would have to be commercially successful. So therefore, there was no point in us putting up artificial barriers to the successful commercial side of the operation. And we determined that, given that, then our job was to maximise the benefits that we could get to the local community, accruing from that commercial development, if you like.” (Community Liaison Committee member B)

However, there was a marked tendency on the part of both DDDA officials and the other interests represented on the DDDA Council to claim that proposals put forward by the community, towards which they were not favourably disposed, would negatively impact on the commercial viability of a development. This formed a second barrier to effective community participation, as the community representatives were not in a position to prove that their proposals would not deter potential investors in the area. Furthermore, the high status of some of the other members of the DDDA Council initially intimidated some of the community representatives, discouraging them from arguing their points as forcefully as they might otherwise have done:

“...with all them arguments that were going on, there was a lot of heated arguments at the table. I felt that we, as community groups, I couldn’t sit with a chief executive of some big company or some big, high civil servant and argue a point at the table because they’d bamboozle me with all sorts of stuff, you see. But we found, at the end of the day, that we were respected at the table. Respect came after a couple of years but there was a lot of respect at the table from everyone, for the fight that we had put in, for what we got for the local community.” (Community Liaison Committee member C)

Vociferous disputes arose, particularly with regard to the 20% social and affordable housing clause. Aided by the unprecedented buoyancy of the property market, concerns regarding

'community gain' measures having a detrimental effect on the commercial attractiveness of Docklands developments have ultimately proved unfounded.

A slight tendency for the community to under-value its own local knowledge, while over-emphasising the importance of professional expertise posed a third barrier to effective participation. One community representative on the DDDA Council chose not to engage with physical planning issues. She did not see it as her area of expertise and generally preferred to focus on the social regeneration of the Docklands, leaving physical planning issues to the professionals employed by the DDDA:

"...as a [DDDA] Council member, I'm at the level of decision-making, to influence how our area develops, around the social agenda...of course...the planning applications, S.25s, all of that would come before the Council and we have an opportunity to input into it or whatever. But, we concentrate our energy on the social agenda, delivering that. And that is around education, employment and housing. We tend to leave a lot of the stuff to the people who are experts in that field in the Authority. That's not to say that you don't question things but we tend to conserve our energy for the areas where it affects our communities." (Community Liaison Committee member A)

A similar tendency to over-emphasise the importance of professional expertise at the expense of local knowledge on the part of the DDDA is suggested by one community representative's reports of the Authority sometimes failing to listen to the community's point of view:

"There's one argument that came up, just not too long ago. It's been argued on a while but it came to a head, where we have the social and we have the affordable...you've a gap in the middle, where you have people who earn a wage, and a fair wage, can't get on the Corporation housing list to get a social and can't afford an affordable, stuck in the middle. So, we're looking at an affordable rental scheme for those and it was pooh-pooed out of the way, 'No, no way'. And I met some people from Boston, who run a project, run an affordable rental programme in a number of houses along the East coast of the States. And I got them in to do a presentation and they were told 'No'...We then heard afterwards, that the Board of the Authority had been over and visited this group anyway, you know. And anyway, I got them in for a second presentation and I was told 'No, it's not a runner in Ireland'. Special legislation, all this type of stuff. I said 'Look, the Authority has been movers in all of this type of stuff in the past. We can set it that within the S.25, there must be a certain section of affordable rental and that can be within the 20%'. But, they said pooh-pooed it off the table. And then the Chief Executive came in about two months later and gave a presentation on affordable rental. So, I don't know where the hell that came from and I had war with the Chairman over it, that 'Where the hell?'...We had put this on the table and we were told it was a load of crap and next of all, the Chief Executive comes in with a great idea that's his! Like, it's crazy. So, there's that type of stuff that goes on... And the stuff that goes on...say river regeneration. I don't think river regeneration is going to work because the more bridges they build, the less use the river gets. So, the local communities won't be able to use the river. It'll be like up-river shortly, that it'll be dead. There's that type of stuff that goes on. So, they listen sometimes but a lot of the times they don't, you know. It's a kind of a strange situation. In education, social infrastructure, that type of stuff, yeah, they listen. And sometimes you need a protest for them to get to listen, really...And employment they do but sometimes that takes a protest, before they start to listen... And they're the guardians of us as well, that they won't lead us astray..." (Community Liaison Committee member C)

Finally, marked inequality in the distribution of power between the various stakeholders represented on the Council of the DDDA posed a serious barrier to the effective participation of the seven community representatives in decision-making. The DDDA and other public agencies held the purse strings as far as public funding was concerned, while business interests and developers controlled private investment in the Docklands, which was vital to the successful regeneration of the Docklands. With no significant financial resources, the community representatives had little bargaining power. One community representative

reported DDDA officials and civil servants occasionally banding together to threaten the withdrawal of funding in an attempt to quash objections from the community representatives:

“...sometimes, there’s the odd threat sent out at the table. Where you would have a Department official, just say the Department of the Environment, and the Chief Executive. Which was just an argument we were having not too long ago, about a certain area in the Grand Canal Basin. And I argued a point on certain issues. That I wouldn’t allow the development to go ahead because of...certain things...At a full Council meeting, this argument was going on and the Chairman was stepping in and saying ‘Look...let’s pull back from this a bit and...I’ll try sort it out between now and the next meeting’. And when he said that, that was fine. This guy from the Department turned around to the Chief Executive and it was a veiled threat...‘Well, I have x amount of funding sitting on my desk...Will I pull it now or...will I leave it sitting there?...Because this funding could go’...And I looked at the guy and I said ‘Do you expect me to...jump because you’ve made a veiled threat?’. And he said ‘This is not a veiled threat’, he said. But I said ‘Well, it sounds to me like it is. Why bring it up now?’. And that one kind of went away. The Chairman...just pushed it aside. But, sometimes, the Department officials and the Authority will band together...to send out little threats. But, we’ve got so used to them now...it’s not a huge deal any more...” (Community Liaison Committee member C)

Concerns for the Future

An important concern for the seven communities comprising the Dublin Docklands area was ensuring the sustainability of the regeneration beyond the life of the DDDA:

“The Docklands can roll these things out and, I keep on saying it, in 2012, the Docklands is finished. What’s going to happen then? And we need to be prepared for what’s going to happen 2012. Whether they set up a new authority, following on from CHDDA, DDDA and maybe there’s something else going to be set up, I haven’t a clue. But...if the DDDA just walk away in 2012, we have major problems. And I think, from now until 2012, what the community groups anyway should be doing is planning on how to sustain whatever’s happened within the Docklands into the future. And the sustainability is going to be the big problem because in ten years’ time, that’s when the bits and pieces start to fall and the system starts to break down. While the Docklands is kind of holding everyone in the cocoon and feeding out and helping out, there’s no problem. If there’s a hiccup, they can step in and sort it out. But once they’re gone, I reckon, there’s no central core to hold the whole lot together...” (Community Liaison Committee member C)

5.4. URBAN RENEWAL OF THE LIBERTIES: THE MONITORING COMMITTEE OF THE LIBERTIES-COOMBE INTEGRATED AREA PLAN

The Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan

On its introduction in 1998, the Department of the Environment and Local Government heralded the new Urban Renewal Scheme as “a radical departure from previous schemes” which had focused on the physical or property renewal in designated areas of the city. The 1998 Urban Renewal Scheme would involve “a more targeted approach to the award of urban renewal incentives, both in terms of their scale and the way in which they will be applied.” The scheme would be based on “the concept that the designation of an area should not take place in isolation but should emerge from a broadly-based Integrated Area Plan” (Department of Environment and Local Government, 1999).

Dublin City Council invested the Integrated Area Plan (IAP) approach to urban planning with a similar significance. It described the IAPs as representing “a major departure from the long-established approach of the City Development Plan which concentrated on a segregated land-use/environmental philosophy incorporating a range of generalised policies which applied to the city-wide area” (Gleeson, 1999, 52). Integrated Area Plans, which would be distinguished by three core features – holism, localism, sectoral integration – have been described as “localized planning mechanisms which aim to embrace the complexity of contemporary urban systems through developing a holistic approach towards the achievement of social, economic and environmental goals while encouraging the necessary inter-sectoral co-ordination to achieve such aims” (McGuirk and MacLaran, 2001, 450).

The Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan was one of five Integrated Area Plans (IAPs) prepared by Dublin Corporation under the 1998 Urban Renewal Scheme. Taking its cue from Departmental guidelines, Dublin City Council explained that tax designations would be “based on the concept of Integrated Area Plans (IAPs), which address not only issues of physical development but also cover wider issues of local socio-economic benefit, social housing, affordable housing and community projects including training and education” (Dublin Corporation, 1999b). Having outlined the objective of the Liberties/Coombe IAP in the following manner:

“The Plan’s objective is to bring about sustainable urban regeneration by integrating physical, social and economic interventions to address the key issues in the area.” (Dublin Corporation, 1998, i)

Dublin City Council proceeded to elaborate on the detail of such an integrated development concept under eight renewal strategies in the text of the *Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan*.¹

An Integrated Area Plan with specific physical renewal objectives

In addition to outlining a wide array of integrated social, economic and physical renewal objectives, Dublin City Council also expounded on the detail of its physical renewal objectives in relation to each tax designated site in an Urban Design Framework Plan contained in the appendices to the Liberties/Coombe IAP. In the case of Cork St. and the Coombe, the thoroughfare whose redevelopment would both constitute the centrepiece of the Liberties/Coombe IAP and prove the site of many contested planning permissions, Dublin City Council reiterated the design specifications for each of the route’s tax designated sites in a sworn Compulsory Purchase Order hearing the following year (Brudell, Hammond & Henry, 2004). Dublin City Council provided further categoric assurances on the nature of the developments permissible on each of the tax-designated sites within that hearing.

¹(i) Land Use; (ii) Built Environment, Urban Form and Urban Design; (iii) Employment, Enterprise, Education and Training; (iv) Health, Community and Amenity; (v) Housing; (vi) Conservation and Archaeology; (vii) Tourism, Arts and Culture; (viii) Transport and Movement.

"Each of the tax incentive sites in the IAP has a mini development brief in the Appendices which sets out the proposed form and use of development necessary in order to both attract tax incentives, and conform with the overall design framework for the corridor." (Transcript CPO Hearing, 1999, 136-7).

Incorporation of the community within the Plan's implementation structures

In addition to the new thrust for integrated, holistic planning, the 1998 Urban Renewal Scheme was also notable for its moves to incorporate local communities within the structures overseeing the implementation of the Integrated Area Plans. The 1998 Urban Renewal Scheme was introduced in the wake of a comprehensive review of previous urban renewal schemes (KPMG et al., 1996) which had noted the largely reactive role into which the two available avenues for 'input' (the development plan and the planning application) had cast communities in the redevelopment of their own areas.

"It has been found that an intermediate level of public consultation is required for local area planning in order to allow the local residents and businesses to adopt a more proactive role in urban renewal than the largely reactive nature of their involvement to date." (KPMG et al., 1996, xi).

In advance of determining the precise form which such 'an intermediate level of public consultation' would assume, Dublin City Council made many commitments to the significance that the community of the Liberties/Coombe would assume in the implementation of the Integrated Area Plan. "Having campaigned for many years to have the widespread social and physical problems of the area addressed" it acknowledged the community's expectation that "the three-pronged objective of physical, social and economic renewal can be achieved within the context of the I.A.P." (Dublin Corporation, 1998: 91). It described the "strong energetic and varied community group structure" as one of the "key strengths" of the Liberties/Coombe area and acknowledged "the extent and vigour of the community sector" as "one of the most important resources of the area." (ibid. 89, 91). It spoke repeatedly of the importance of developing an implementation mechanism to "ensure that the expertise and focus of the community sector will continue to be given adequate expression" – an effective implementation process that would be "crucial in ensuring the success of the Integrated Area Plans." (ibid. 91; 125). "Active partnership" between the statutory and community sectors was described as "vital in this regard" (Stubbs, 2000: 66). On its publication in 1998, the *Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan* originally proposed the establishment of a cross-sectoral Steering Committee which would include "wide representation from public, private and community sector groups recognised as having a role and associated with the Plan area" and a Project Implementation Team that would report to the Steering Committee (Dublin Corporation, 1998: 125). The implementation mechanism subsequently established differed from the original 1998 proposals in one very significant respect - the substitution of a cross-sectoral Monitoring Committee for the cross-sectoral Steering Committee (Brudell, 2000: 24). While such an implementation structure did not confer the guiding and steering function which the community of the Liberties had hoped to enjoy in the plan's implementation, it did confer the reduced right to monitor the plan's implementation within a committee that the Department of the Environment (1999) exhorted to "adopt an ongoing, pro-active role throughout the period of the IAP."

The planning brief with which the Monitoring Committee was entrusted

The *1999 Urban Renewal Scheme Monitoring Guidelines* outlined the specific purpose of the Monitoring Committee in the following manner:

- *To monitor progress in achieving the objectives of the IAP;*
- *To establish performance indicators in relation to meeting the objectives of the IAP and against which progress can be measured;*
- *To identify and deal with problems or barriers which may arise and which are causing delay in the implementation process;*
- *To address any change in circumstances since the preparation of the IAP; and*

- *To respond to any unforeseen opportunities which may present themselves.*
(Guideline 2.4, Department of the Environment and Local Government, 1999).

While monitoring was to relate to the Integrated Area Plan as a whole, the Department of Environment entrusted the Monitoring Committee with a specific brief in relation to the development of individual tax-designated sites.

"It is important that monitoring should relate to the IAP as a whole and not just the designated sites. However the emphasis will necessarily be on the development of the designated sites and their role in achieving the overall objectives of the IAP."
(Guideline 2.6 Department of the Environment and Local Government, 1999).

Case study focus

This case study presents the experience of the community of Dublin's southwest inner-city of engaging in the implementation of the Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan (IAP). It is structured around the perspective of the four community organisations which accepted Dublin City Council's invitation to delegate a representative to represent their community's interests in the Monitoring Committee of the Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan (IAP). While the community's interests obviously pertained to each of the three social, economic and environmental strands to the IAP, it is the latter category of physical renewal and the planning process that is of particular interest to the discussion in question.

In engaging in the plan's implementation, two of those community representatives worked closely with a policy analyst employed by a community organisation in which both were heavily involved at that time. The perspective of that policy analyst is accordingly also presented as a community perspective. While the perspective of these community representatives is the central focus of this case study, it also incorporates the experience and perspective of a number of other members of the Monitoring Committee – two local councillors,² a local trader representative and the Manager of the Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan.

Awareness and experience of planning prior to the IAP

In most cases, community representatives entered the Monitoring Committee of the Liberties/Coombe IAP with virtually no knowledge or prior experience of planning. Three of the four community representatives were employees or representatives of organisations operating with a broad community-development brief. While the term 'planning' may have featured strongly in the day to day activities of such community organisations, it was normally planning in the more general socio-economic sense – i.e. planning for future community on the various issues arising in community development. Their involvement in actual planning was typically confined to local authority regeneration programmes. While one had made submissions during the planning phase of the Luas (light rail) project and another mentioned submissions to the City Development Plan, none appeared to have engaged in planning objections or appeals. All entered the Monitoring Committee of the Liberties/Coombe IAP in response to a formal invitation extended by Dublin City Council to their respective mandating organisations.

However, one community representative occupied quite a different position from his colleagues. In the first instance, he was resident in the area and representative of resident interests. He appears to have been the only community representative to have entered the Monitoring Committee with firsthand experience of the planning process – an experience which dated from thirty years previously.

"I suppose, my first experience with planning...The factory at the back of me burned down one time and they were rebuilding it. My house was there before the factory, so the factory was built to respect the back windows of my house, which opened into the yard of the factory. And when the new plans were put in, they were building right up on top of me and I appealed."

² The third councillor for the south-west inner city declined to be interviewed.

I appealed it to the City Council and at the time I think it was about £7.50 to go to An Bord Pleanála, which I couldn't afford and I hadn't the expertise anyway, even if I could afford it, at the time. It's probably thirty years ago now. And I let it go, I couldn't fight it. But anyway, that was my first experience of the planning system. It wasn't a great one because they were allowed to do things that they shouldn't have been." (Former Community Representative A)

In the following years, the physical and social blight accumulating along Cork St. and across the wider Liberties area had given him ongoing cause to reflect on planning and the absence of planning in the area.

"I had a bad experience starting out of the planning system. So after that, now and again I would think of the area that I lived in and all the, kind of, social problems that were in the area. At this time I'd never heard of a town planner, I didn't know there was such a thing as a town planner. But, somewhere in my subconscious, I used to say to myself 'Whoever allowed all this to happen, allowed the dereliction that has occurred in the area to go and just be left there, and then to build in a way that was so badly planned or maybe not planned at all'. I said 'There has to be something wrong in the way that the area was allowed to develop or not develop'. So that was only a, kind of, vague kind of thought that was in my mind. And I was always aware of the amount of social problems that were in the area. And I knew from the time I was a child, that they intended to widen Cork Street and that a lot of the problems started because they knocked down the buildings on either side of the road. Couldn't give planning permission because they couldn't do anything to develop them because the road had to be done first and the money was never available for the road. So, that was always in the back of my mind." (Former Community Representative A)

While he was to become involved in community activism in the years immediately preceding the IAP on an issue entirely separate to the physical planning of the area, his thoughts would increasingly turn to the opportunities vested in the future redevelopment of the street. News that the government was finally in a position to begin work on the Cork St./Coombe Bypass provided his residents association with the impetus that it had been waiting for.

"Now, we thought we were being original. We sat down a couple of nights, a few nights and one afternoon, and we came up with this idea. We said 'Why not, when they're building the new Cork Street, employ local kids as far as they could on the building? And why not use the derelict sites to build the type of industries or places of employment that could employ local people?' And ask builders or put it on them as a condition, that when they come into the area to redevelop the sites, because they were getting tax incentives, that they would agree to take on local people, train them up, kids in particular, as plumbers, carpenters etc. Build a hotel on the street, build a custom-built place where kids could be educated prior to the thing happening in child-minding. So, they would have a few things going for the place that would turn the dereliction into a benefit for the community. We all know that's called 'urban renewal' and it's been done in every city across Europe but we thought it was an original idea." (Former Community Representative A)

With the assistance of a neighbouring architectural practice, [named architectural practice], the Cork St. & Maryland Residents Association was able to translate its idea into a formal plan for the regeneration of the area, *Cork Street/Maryland Towards a New Future* (1997). Following the publication of an Integrated Area Plan remarkably similar in content, the chairperson of the residents association was also invited to join the Monitoring Committee.

"We launched it [the community's regeneration plan] in the Mansion House first and then we sent a copy of it into City Council. The Integrated Area Plan was a brain-child of theirs at the time. And when we saw the first copy of the Integrated Area Plan, we said 'Look, they've taken an awful lot of what we had'. We again thought what we had said was original but it would have been done anyway. But a lot of what we had said had been incorporated into the Integrated Area Plan. So from then on, because we had submitted this and because we had shown an interest, I was asked to go on to the Monitoring Committee of the Integrated Area Plan, which I did." (Former Community Representative A)

Catalyst for Involvement in planning and urban renewal ***The community- based Environment Working Group.***

The community representative in questions had by that time become very active in the Environment Working Group of the South West Inner City Network (SWICN) – a group chaired by SWICN's representative to the Monitoring Committee and one that had already articulated a brief in relation to the planning issue. That group was co-ordinated by the organisation's policy analyst who undertook to work closely with the community representatives in ensuring an effective and critical community presence in the implementation of the IAP. The group also included the only independent community planner available to inner-city communities in its membership.

The close reporting and working relationship that evolved between these two community representatives and the members of the Environment Working Group was the catalyst for a considerably more extensive community involvement with decision-making practices and procedures within the local authority and the planning decisions which it was taking within the context of the IAP from that point forward.

"SWICN's involvement with planning dates from early 2000. It was probably very minimal, prior to the introduction of the Liberties/Coombe IAP... The IAP was a huge catalyst for a small number of key people getting involved with the planning issue – an involvement which accelerated hugely thereafter..."

While SWICN was extensively involved with other aspects of the IAP from the outset - as is evident from the minutes of its Environment Group, its public information events and the production of a steady stream of documents, reports, position papers and questions from 2000, its involvement with the actual planning system was minimal until the Liberties/Coombe IAP impacted on the home and neighbourhood of [named individual, community representative IAP Monitoring Committee] – the secretary of the Environment Group and the community representative for the Cork St. & Maryland Residents Association." (Former Policy Analyst)

As a working group almost exclusively concerned with urban renewal, planning and social housing issues, SWICN's Environment Group subsequently assumed an important function in mediating and imparting information on the implementation of the IAP to the organisation's affiliated membership of community organisations and tenants and residents groups. In the years that followed, it would make submissions on the restoration of public buildings, draft urban design framework plans and the City Development Plan. It would provide assistance to individuals engaging in the planning appeals process and local authority residents whose homes and amenities were threatened by proposals contained within a draft urban design framework plan. It would itself object and appeal to one of the largest planning applications lodged in respect of the area at that time.³

Beyond the provision and brokering of technical expertise, it also began to adopt a critical monitoring role in relation to the manner in which Dublin City Council was implementing the IAP and the ends to which the urban renewal project was functioning. Crucially, it undertook to document and archive the community's experience and growing concerns in relation to the implementation of the IAP ensuring that each report and position paper was researched, referenced and documented scrupulously and placed in the public arena.

The local traders' representative

If most of the community representatives entered the Monitoring Committee of the Liberties/Coombe IAP with very limited exposure to planning, the position of other members of the Monitoring Committee appeared somewhat comparable. The local traders' representative who joined the Monitoring Committee approximately two years into its lifetime, cited a history of *ad hoc* engagements between traders and Dublin Corporation on issues

³ Planning Application 2656/03 lodged by Eircom and the Office for Public Works. The scheme in question was known as 'Westgate.'

such as lighting, paving, litter, car parking and bus corridors. While the traders had opposed a proposal for an off-licence on Meath St.,

"...in general, we would tend not to oppose applications. We, kind of, have a fairly pro-development stance. Unless it was something - something outrageous." (Local Traders' Representative)

The contrasting position of local councillors

Interviews with two of the area's councillors reveal contrasting exposures to the world of planning. One councillor was in a position to cite an involvement with planning dating back to the 1970s.

"Well, I got involved in planning maybe 35 years ago, in the locality. The Corporation proposed to put roads through the area - wide roads. They wanted to knock down John Dillon Street - the artisans' dwelling houses... And they also were moving people out of the area because there were a lot of tenement houses and instead of refurbishing, they were moving people out to Crumlin, to Drimnagh, to Ballyfermot and later to Clondalkin and then eventually to Tallaght. So, I got involved because of that and we were trying to point out to the authorities that the city should be for people, not just for motorcars... The road that caused the most trouble was the Inner Tangent Ring Road. And the Inner Tangent Ring Road came from Cuffe Street and it was coming in to Patrick Street, High Street and Bridge Street, bringing cars right through the centre of the city and right through the Liberties. And we argued with them that that was the wrong thing to do and that they were turning the area into a series of traffic islands... We've been proven right because there was no need for the wide roads. Because, number one, the more cars you bring in on a wide road when they have to reach a bottleneck at the other end, so it didn't work.. So, they were designing the Liberties to suit cars coming through rather than people living in it. So that was when I first got involved." (Councillor B)

While the then Dublin Corporation was to be partially successful in effecting its road plans for the Liberties, that early engagement was to be the beginning of a lifelong engagement with planning issues for the councillor in question.

"They got their wide road anyway. But they wanted to have a second leg up at Thomas Court and they wanted to knock down St. Catherine's Church as part of that, you know. And they had knocked down a lot of buildings but we eventually stopped them - not only the group from the locality but the Georgian Society and all stopped them over knocking down the church. So, that was the beginning of it. It was over road widening, it was over not building houses for people rather than roads and for building offices rather than houses." (Councillor B)

While a lifelong member of organisations such as An Taisce and occasional fellow traveller with organisations such as the Georgian Society, the councillor in question related a history of activism extending beyond the conservation of Georgian houses, historic churches and archaeological sites to the construction and preservation of social housing. The exclusion of inner-city communities from the planning process provided an early impetus for all such actions.

"So then on the Coombe there was a lot of dereliction. There was a big derelict site on the Coombe and there was a debate over what should be put on it and I think the Corporation wanted to put flats, such as the ones in Chamber Street - Chamber Street is up off Cork Street. And we objected, we said we wanted houses. And eventually we had our way and the houses were built. The houses were the first local authority town houses to be built in Dublin and now they're all over Dublin... but the first one was Ashgrove in the Coombe and we were responsible for that." (Councillor B)

His early exposure to planning led to a conviction that communities needed to become involved in planning at the earliest possible stage - to understand the importance of

intervening at draft development plan stage as opposed to being relegated to a merely reactive role at planning application stage.

"...what we try to do, with [named community representative] and all, is to get them [local organisations] to get involved in the planning. Not to wait until something happens and then you can do nothing about it, to try to do something when you can do something about it. Try to get involved in the early stage... The Dublin City Association of An Taisce initiated objections to the development plan. People didn't bother about it originally but now people know about it, that if they don't do something now when it's in the plan, when a development is proposed they can't do anything about it." (Councillor B)

His conviction about the importance of the planning process led to a wide-ranging involvement with the planning process encompassing City Development Plans, Integrated Area Plans, the regeneration of local authority flat complexes, proposals for the development of a light rail system and individual planning objections in the decades that followed. Without any involvement with planning issues prior to her election, a second councillor assumed her seat in the chambers of Dublin City Council in a considerably more vulnerable position vis-à-vis firsthand knowledge and experience of planning.

"...when I went in 1999, the development plan was already, kind of, halfway through the stage of being accepted by the Council. And it's quite a hefty document so it took a long time to kind of - about planning regulations and things like that to - come to grips with. So I could say naively, five years ago, when the development plan was put to the Council, I was quite - I wasn't up to speed on it as I should have been, you know. Because I mean, I'd only gone into the Council and we were straight into the development plan. So it took a while to, kind of, grasp it, you know." (Councillor A)

In the absence of any working knowledge about planning or the planning process, she resorted to the advice and position of her own political party.

"But, I suppose I would have went on advice of other people who were in my group, my Fine Gael group. I would have took their opinions as well on certain things. They would have guided me and so on." (Councillor A)

Entry onto the Monitoring Committee of the IAP in turn presented the same councillor with a new planning document but familiar difficulties.

"The Integrated Area Plan, the IAP, was introduced in the Council and I was asked to sit on the committee. And I sat on the committee. It was all a new learning experience for me because I'd never been in that situation before. So, it took a while to perhaps know what was going on. Some of it went over my head, I have to be honest with you. I think sometimes you'd need a degree in architecture and everything else to, kind of, participate. Although I'm a lot better now than I was... I just think there's an awful lot of details to take down. As a common person trying to take it all in, it's very difficult." (Councillor A)

If this particular councillor was just like any other 'common person' experiencing difficulty in 'taking it all in,' she was unlike most residents in the Liberties in one crucial respect - the ability to purchase independent technical advice as a private individual when faced with contentious planning decisions.

"But, there were huge, huge issues around three or four developments of big sites [in the councillor's own area]. It caused an awful lot of hostility in the area and people were really hammering down City Council over it, you know. And I would have had a huge input on a few of them because I would have had to sit with them and put together objections, you know. And I actually employed an architect myself for two of them because I was so mad about what was being proposed by the developer..." (Councillor A)

The extent to which individuals entered the Monitoring Committee of the Liberties/Coombe IAP with prior knowledge or experience of planning is a consideration that is not exclusive to community representatives and local councillors. The background and professional qualifications of those officials appointed to manage the implementation of the IAPs is of some interest. In an Integrated Area Plan which would turn out to be mainly about physical planning, Dublin City Council appointed an official with an administrative rather than a planning background to the position of Project Manager. In the event that any contentious planning issues were to arise, the Project Manager would obviously be obliged to defer to the planning professionals operating behind the scene.

"...the planners now and the engineers, they take on board, you know, things that we would be aware of from either feedback from the community or, you know. Obviously, sometimes they put up their arguments as to why it should be this way or that way. And, you know, you can live with the professional opinion, if you like, as to why something should happen that way. But, sometimes they would change based on, like you know, practicalities of situations, like you know. If something isn't going to work, even though it might be the preferred option for them, you know, go along - they're flexible, you know, within reason, I suppose. Like obviously, on planning decisions, the planner for the area now would have his views, that the street needs to be recreated, it's wide enough to take heights and, like, I wouldn't be trying to influence him. I would leave that type of decision to a professional planner, to be honest, you know." (DCC officer)

Dublin City Council's Commitment to Community Participation

What is 'community'?

Any attempt to assess Dublin City Council's commitment to securing community participation in the planning system must be prefaced by a consideration of what precisely is meant by 'community' in this instance. In a climate in which the presence and participation of community members within the various interagency and public-private forums is cited as an implicit endorsement of the plans being progressed within those forums, this question assumes a very particular significance.

One community representative directed attention to the ease with which other players invoke the term 'community' and the assumptions that they chose to make about the constituency denoted by such a term.

"When you talk about community, you're talking really about five or six people really because an awful lot of what I have told you has passed over the heads of people in here. If you had stopped the first ten people in Cork Street and said 'What's the Integrated Area Plan?' I'm sure they wouldn't have a clue. So, it comes down to a few community activists. And the few activists, I'm sure we'll do whatever we can but the amount of success I don't know we're going to have with them." (Former Community Representative A)

This point was picked up by others who questioned whether community organisations were in fact representative of the communities that they purport to represent.

"If you don't have a vibrant community organisation or if it's not representative of the community, then you have a problem. It's a constant challenge to remain representative of your constituent community, to inform and engage that community and to simultaneously maintain a critical focus on the key issues. If you don't have people flooding to your doors, then there's a question to be asked about the effectiveness and representative nature of your organisation. You have to be hugely self-critical. In recent years, the number of tenants' groups affiliated to SWICN has decreased significantly. You would have to ask why?" (Former Policy Analyst)

If Dublin City Council deemed concerns about the representative nature of 'community representatives' to be 'a fair point,' it also conceded that it did not look beyond or beneath existing organisations and committees when inviting communities to participate in its plans.

"The people who are on the committees tend to be the people who get nominated to the Monitoring Committee, for example. It's the same faces that you see, all right. And it's very

hard for us to drill down any deeper than, we'll say, committees of residents' groups, you know. With a population of something like 21,000 in the area, we wouldn't have the resources to hit every one of them, you know. So, we have to work through the representatives, the chairs of committees, the secretaries of committees and through the groups that are there, the representative groups, if you like." (DCC official)

This practice appears to have extended to its decisions about which interests were deemed worthy of representation and which were not. While this discussion pertains to community representation, Dublin City Council's contrasting attitudes to two traditional indigenous economic interests are of interest in seeking to divine the future character of the area. Local trader interests were included in the Monitoring Committee, yet street trader interests were not represented within either the Local Traders' Association or the IAP Monitoring Committee.

While adopting a more pragmatic approach to the question of whether formally designated 'community representatives' were in fact representative of their constituent communities, the local traders' representative described the responsibility accruing to all such representatives regardless.

"They're never going to be representative because, I mean, the nature of the situation is that people just - the majority of people just aren't interested unless and until it, sort of, affects them in some way. I mean, it's the same with ourselves in the Traders' Association, where they would have more reason to be, kind of, involved, in that their economic future depends on it! But still, like - nevertheless... if you are in the position of being representative... once something goes wrong, they'll know who to blame! Even if they have never... participated before." (Local Traders' Representative)

Advancing a larger conception of community that transcends the categories under which that entity is usually delineated by official parties, he also directed attention to the interests shared by both local traders and local residents.

"...we're all very small shop-keepers around here and, like, the Corporation thinks in terms of the very large retail outlets down in the city centre. And our interests and theirs are completely different and you need to just keep on getting that across...I suppose, the bottom line is we want to keep this as an area somewhat similar to what it is: an area of small shops that will, I mean, obviously change with the changing area. But the great fear, which both the residents, I suppose, and ourselves have is that, you know, vested interests could turn this into an extension of Temple Bar very easily. And we didn't want that to happen and neither did the representatives of the residents so we, kind of, we had a common interest in that." (Local Traders' Representative)

Dublin City Council's commitment to community participation

One community representative offered a positive assessment of Dublin City Council's commitment to community participation in the planning system. An organisational commitment to genuine participation appeared to be hampered by the reluctance of individual officials only.

"I don't think Dublin City Council pay lip service. I think - I believe that Dublin City Council are genuinely trying to encourage participation. But I think that, within Dublin City Council, they have a problem, in the sense that not everybody is going the same direction. You're talking about human beings and you're talking about some people who've been in the City Council all their lives and have different practice, a different way of working, work ethic. And you're also talking about, in middle management now... people are being brought in who are much more far-thinking, open to, you know, listening and, you know, change and all that kind of stuff. So, I think within the City Council as an organisation, there's huge - not conflict but, kind of you know - pulling and - to-ing and fro-ing, if you understand what I mean. I genuinely, from middle management upwards, I genuinely believe that there is an openness to encourage participation. But, I think they're in a traditional practice area, you know, it's traditional - they still have traditions, a way to work. And when you're talking about human resources and

personnel, that's very difficult for people to iron out, if you understand what I mean. It's slow to change and I think they have gone some way to try to change that. Unfortunately, they can't sack people, do you know. That's what I would believe. I'm optimistic." (Community Representative C)

Yet the above view was preceded by a rather contrary assessment from the same community representative who castigated Dublin City Council for failing to evince any genuine commitment to the lesser process of consultation, describing a process whereby Dublin City Council would typically present the community with agreed plans whose content would not be altered in any substantial way by any subsequent consultation process.

"Generally, what happens is that Dublin City Council planners and architects and the various people, say the traffic people and all of that, would do their plan, would design what their plan is or they would invite somebody to do their plan for them. In the most - I think 99%, or 90% anyway for sure, they would - the plan would be done at the desk. There's a term that they use, it's 'desk planning' or 'desk-based study'. So invariably, they would not have consulted with people at all. So, they would have produced their plan and then they would, say, put it on display. Dublin City Council would put it on display, maybe somewhere locally. And people get irate because 'Oh, you can't do that and you can't do that and you can't do that'. And again, around I think 80% or 90% of the time, Dublin City Council would approve the plan, having done the consultation, even when people say 'No!'." (Community Representative C)

Others believed that Dublin City Council has now come to understand the dividends to be garnered from working with communities. One community representative expressed sympathy for the difficulties which Dublin City Council faces in realising its organisational commitment to greater community participation.

"I don't think initially, Dublin Corporation knew what participation was from the community, at the outset. And I think the challenges that were put up by the community within the IAP actually frightened them, I think. Actively involve us or actively encourage us? Originally, no. I think, over the past two years, it's slightly changed. I think they see more benefits from working with communities, to fulfil what they're hoping to fulfil, that's their vision. That although we may be objecting to certain elements within the IAP plans or other plans that they put forward, that if benefits are there for the community, we will see them and we'll fight for them. And I don't think Dublin City Council want to, sort of, exclude those benefits from their plans. I think commercialism is tying their hands, particularly now with the selling of their property. They operate under a very hand-cuffed system, Dublin City Council." (Community Representative B)

The local traders' representative accepted the local authority's commitment to community participation in the implementation of the IAP, but understood it as participation within a bureaucratic system in which the standing of each 'partner' had been clearly circumscribed.

"Yes! They certainly - they're certainly encouraging participation. You come up against the problem again, they are the civil service for the area, they're acting under the - you have a layer of elected representatives who are the, you know, the Area Committee, if you like, and then you have...the bods like ourselves. So, really all we can be is effectively a sounding board, an advisory body..." (Local Traders' Representative)

Others accepted Dublin City Council's commitment to participation, but understood it as being in conflict with the development imperative informing the local authority's current modus operandi.

"Well, that's their objective. That's their stated objective but they don't like people who would [pursue a line contrary to theirs] - they're for development. They're under instructions, I believe, from the government to develop the city." (Councillor B)

On this point there was unanimity among the councillors consulted.

"I think Dublin City Council is a business, you know what I mean. And I think they have, you know, what would I say, they have their priorities too. I suppose, they have to have a budget for the Council and they have to bring in a certain amount of money." (Councillor A)

As is apparent from the preceding views, Dublin City Council's commitment to community participation was understood to operate on a sliding scale from genuine commitment, through pragmatic self-interest to a commitment flexible enough to respond to the dictates of capital. Other community representatives refused to recognise any such commitment to community participation.

"No! This is my short answer. I felt very frustrated on it [IAP Monitoring Committee] because what happens is we're on it and then we only meet once a quarter and in the meantime, Dublin City Council goes off and makes all kinds of decisions. So, I don't know what we're monitoring. It's an excuse for something, you know. It's not satisfactory, whatsoever." (Community Representative D)

Comments from local councillors raised additional questions about the degree to which Dublin City Council was trying to encourage the participation of elected representatives in the planning system.

"I know the first couple of months on the Council was just a nightmare. I was getting piles upon piles of stuff to try and wade through.... You know kind of, it does take you a little while to kind of come to grips with it all. I do think that, you know, there should be a lot more supports given to councillors, to help them around planning issues and trying to cope with reading plans and things like that. Because it can be very difficult and when you're not, kind of - I wouldn't be in that kind of field at all, so it would help to, kind of, have an input alright." (Former Community Representative A)

These views should be measured against Dublin City Council's assessments of its own success in going 'above and beyond what we're statutorily required to do' in consulting the public of the Liberties.

"Well, I think it's just the way things are now. Things have changed a lot in local government, in local authorities, about public consultation. At one time, a local authority could just go ahead and do what they liked without any public consultation, as regards building a housing scheme or building anything that they wanted to do. Now you have the Part 8 process as it's known, where anything we want to do ourselves, we have to go through public consultation. So! I believe myself it is a good thing because before, there was no, kind of, there was no consultation and there was no input from councillors even. The old S.80-something in the Planning Act, you know, where we just could go ahead with development, be it a housing scheme or a road scheme. But, with all the new legislation now, you have EIS and you have, you know, the Part 8 process where there's, you know, procedure there for inviting submissions. But besides the statutory requirements that are there in that legislation that I mentioned, the City Council's policy is to consult on a non-statutory basis, even before - For example, the housing schemes that we talked about there, we had a public consultation meeting on that, before it went to Part 8 process even. We didn't just advertise it and invite submissions. We met with the local communities and we told them what was proposed. And that, in a way, is above and beyond what we're statutorily required to do. But, you know, that's the way we do things in Liberties area anyway and other areas too, indeed." (DCC official)

The Calibre and Clarity of Information:

Representation, misrepresentation, clarity and accessibility

Those who took a keen interest in events leading up to the IAP spoke of the great clarity evident in Dublin City Council's initial public presentation of the standing and content of the Integrated Area Plan. They focused in particular on the detailed evidence that senior officials had give at a sworn Compulsory Purchase Order hearing in respect of the zoning, densities

and maximum heights that would obtain on each of the tax designated sites along the route of the Cork St./Coombe Bypass.

"The first thing they did in Cork Street was, they had to hold, I think it was an EIS study, it's a kind of an environmental study that they had to hold. And they had to have a sworn inquiry chaired by an official from the Department of the Environment. And at that, people who owned the sites along the street, and some of them were owned by the Corporation themselves, they all attended. I made a submission to it and because of the submission, I was invited to attend as well. Now, the submission that we made as a committee was a very broad-based one. It was trying to get some benefit for the community from out of what was going to happen and we also looked for a bit of car-parking along the street for locals. When the inquiry started, I very quickly realised that it was some kind of a sham. I couldn't put my finger on what was going on but everyone that owned a site, they were making the case that for this reason or that reason they weren't prepared to develop it in a certain way. They wanted to be free to develop it whatever way they wanted themselves.

The City Council officials then got up and said 'We have drawn up a site plan for each of the sites', they called it an urban design framework, 'and unless those sites are developed in line with what's in our plans, we won't give the tax incentives'. Now, it was a sworn enquiry and they took the bible in their hand and they swore that that was going to be the position. And sitting there, I accepted it, more or less. I said 'Look, anyone who takes the Bible in their hand and swears he is going to do it, he means to do it or she means to do it'. But to be sure, I questioned them, as far as I could. I made sure that I asked questions of them, that the answer left no room for ambiguity, whatsoever... I had been already asked to monitor this plan and, as part of the plan that I got, at the back this urban design framework was contained in it. Each of the sites had a brief as to the way it would be developed and these people has sworn that, unless it was developed that way, then it wouldn't get certain tax incentives." (Former Community Representative A)

The same community representative had attended the physical planning module of the Four Cities Project⁴ – a project which listed 'physical planning' among its four central themes. In the midst of the barrage of new technical information imparted within the educational workshops on physical planning, he was to retain two pieces of information very clearly – the standing of the Dublin City Development Plan and the inviolability of land zoning.

"...as part of that Integrated Area Plan, they spent some money that they got from Europe on an educational process called The Four Cities. The four cities were Brussels, Liverpool, Dublin and Belfast. So, they had people coming in from different, kind of, professions to speak to us and some of them were town planners, including [named individual] from the Corporation and people like that, other people from the planning department in the City Council. So, we did a kind of a crash course in understanding at least how planning applications should be made and how you could object if you wanted to object. And a lot of it I'm sure went past me and by me but the thing that stuck in my head was this: that one speaker after another, they emphasised that if you were going to make an objection to a plan,

⁴ The Four Cities Project was "a European Union funded initiative exploring four important themes in urban renewal – city living and environmental sustainability, physical planning, economic and community development and cultural diversity and segregation. Four cities - Dublin, Belfast, Brussels and Liverpool are involved in the project and the Liberties /Coombe area has been chosen as the case study for Dublin." The stated aim of the project was "To identify and advance innovative ways of maximising the involvement of local communities in the implementation of urban regeneration projects." The project was to "involve a collaborative approach between the local authorities and local communities, with each city learning from the other." (Dublin City Council, 2004: 4). The physical planning module was to adopt "a particular emphases on the road improvement, housing schemes and redevelopment proposed for the Cork St / Coombe Corridor" (Dublin Corporation Local Agenda 21 Steering Group, 2001). However, in the light of one community representative's subsequent experience when he sought to act on the information imparted in the Four Cities Project, there are important questions to be asked about the calibre and standing of some of the information provided to them within the Project.

if you could demonstrate that it was in breach of the local development plan, then you were half-way home. That the City Council shouldn't give permission for anything that breached the development plan, which had been agreed by the city councillors, that that wouldn't be done. So, that's the bit that stuck in my head and I said 'Whatever else I forget, I'll remember that'. ...the other thing I picked up from the Four Cities thing on planning was that zoning was most important. That if a thing was zoned residential or commercial, that the only ones who could agree those zonings were the city councillors and that everyone else was powerless in the matter. Once that was agreed, they were sacrosanct." (Former Community Representative A)

If Dublin City Council's initial and public presentation of the standing and content of the IAP was marked by great clarity, its subsequent presentation of information pertinent to the implementation of the IAP was not characterised by such lucidity. Community representatives offered very few positive assessments of Dublin City Council's role in ensuring that the host community was kept well informed of plans and proposals for the area. They pointed instead to very perfunctory nature of the information sessions held.

"They did and they didn't [hold information sessions]! And when again you're looking at the community - where I'd have now, from the experience and knowledge around planning or an IAP or what a plan looks like within an IAP. To the general community, you might as well bring them out into the sea and say 'Start swimming!' and not have taught them how to swim. It's gobbledegook! And while it's great to say that there's planning and there's all this stuff down in Dublin City Civic Offices, these detailed plans, give them to the ordinary Joe Soap out there and they wouldn't have a clue. Even myself included at this present time And plus the plan that they're showing you is not the plan that's developed. And if you see a plan and you see these nice houses and you see - If you use a local landmark as to what height such and such is going to be built and you can see it in a nice little display and say "That looks well". But if three years later, all of a sudden there's a building that looked well against a landmark like a church spire or whatever, now in some ways nearly matching or hiding the church spire from a viewpoint. That's not what you looked at on the display. I think that's the knowledge the community needs to be constantly updated on. I think the community also...constantly needs to be in some way informed of the changes and be sold what the benefits are going to be of these changes.

There was a report that we were given, a very expensive report, and I think it was into the second year of the IAP. And it was a study done... on the density... for the Dublin area... The residential density and the height. And it took me probably about four months to, sort of, get my head around what was in it. And that was by asking people questions. I don't know, if I came across something I didn't quite understand, I'd have to find someone who could explain it to me. All we needed was a presentation and we requested a presentation on it... Well, I'm not saying we're stupid but there's areas of expertise that we wouldn't have a clue at. (Community Representative B)

These accounts were endorsed by another Community Representative who described the impenetrable manner in which technical information was presented to the Monitoring Committee.

"...when, you know like, you're explaining things, you should explain everything to everybody as if it's the first time they've ever heard what you're saying and assume that people don't know what you're talking about. That was never done to the Monitoring Committee of the Integrated Area Plan. We never got the benefit of the expertise that was on the other side of the table." (Former Community Representative A)

Delivering information or merely 'selling' a plan

Dublin City Council was characterised as 'selling' as opposed to imparting information; of attempting to dupe inner-city communities into endorsing the local authority's own plans for future heights and densities.

"I think when they were selling the issue of density, coming down along Cork Street, the planners were trying to sell us that - there's the old folks' home up there on Cork Street, which

is a lovely red brick building... a red-brick building, which has four floors and fairly high. And the equivalent of four floors there, would be the equivalent of six or seven floors in a new-build... I'd no objection to a building being built of equal height but I would have objections to a building being built that hadn't got the same architectural properties that was in that building. Because you're talking probably about a twelve-foot ceiling within that building itself, whereas you're talking about a seven-and-a-half to eight foot, if you're lucky in an apartment complex or whatever. Plus, it's a lovely building... a small little private grounds beside it. Apartments or whatever being built wouldn't have that facility. So, I thought it was unfair for them to use that building, when they were showing us the elevation of how to build another building that would fit into the site." (Community Representative B)

One councillor acknowledged Dublin City Council's attempts to inform the members of the Monitoring Committee of its plans, but understood such efforts to have been motivated by expediency.

"...the people around the table tried their best, I suppose. The architect, when he did come in, kind of, was presenting a plan that Dublin City Council most obviously wanted to get on board. I mean, I think all development is money orientated anyway and profit-orientated. So! Because Dublin City Council need money as well. So, it's an opportunity for them when there's a planning application put in, that they're going to get something out of it. So, they're as anxious, I suppose, to get it off the drawing board as anybody else." (Councillor A)

Withholding information

The idea that Dublin City Council kept the community representatives informed in any capacity was sharply refuted by some. Dublin City Council neither informed community representatives of changes to the IAP nor acceded to their requests for information material to the monitoring of the plan.

"Informed of changes, no! Changes in some instances would have already been acted upon and decisions made at Dublin City Council, before the actual monitoring group met..." (Community Representative B)

The decision to hold meetings of the Monitoring Committee on a less frequent basis was also understood as a strategy to lessen Dublin City Council's accountability to the community.

"Now originally it was once a month, then it went to once bi-monthly. But in that bi-monthly period, that there'd be a meeting of the executive group that was set up. So, there was at least a mechanism that was feeding back all the time. But, the chair then decided that once every three months would be enough." (Community Representative B)

Others concurred and described how community representatives were kept informed 'by default' only.' They also suggested that Dublin City Council had been selective in the groups with which it chose to consult.

"... they're supposed to be doing a kind of a refurbishment, traffic calming, all that kind of stuff. That's what this plan is supposed to be about, for the streets as distinct from the flat complexes around here. But, they've decided they'll only consult one group about that, you know. I have made personal representations now to [named individual, DCC Official], in terms of widening that consultation. And he sent me an email yesterday to say 'Yes!', he would have meetings. But, I'll have to watch that like a hawk because it may well not happen at all, you know. I still don't necessarily believe it will come to pass." (Community Representative D)

Imparting of information after the fact

One community representative offered a more positive assessment of Dublin City Council's attempts to present information clearly but judged the manner in which information was presented to be irrelevant by virtue of its being presented after the decision-making procedure and after the fact. Views or concerns expressed in any subsequent consultation process did not affect the content of plans.

"Yes, they do make an effort to try and make it clear, ok. But, what they tend to do is to bring it out - like, they might do the consultation - but bring it out then according to their own agenda.... They do [explain things clearly to the Monitoring Committee] but, you see, what I find is that - The quick answer is 'no' because what they bring to the Monitoring Committee is already kind of done, you know what I mean? So, we're not getting stuff at a stage where you're looking at it from an architectural point of view or anything. It's already, kind of, fait accompli when it comes in." (Community Representative D)

Within the wider community, one councillor believed that elected representatives played a more important role than Dublin City Council in keeping local people informed of major developments.

"We get a planning application booklet every week, like this. And we would have a list of planning applications for Dublin South Central. Other areas as well, but my area's Dublin South Central. Now, a lot of them would be only houses, people doing extensions. But, a lot of them would be fairly big developments of sites right through the inner city... People do ring me and say 'God! I didn't know that was - I knew the site was there but I didn't know that was going to be that', you know what I mean. 'I saw the notice but I didn't bother reading it', kind of. Because sometimes the thing with notices as well, on walls, people don't take time to read them and they should read them, you know!... So, I think it's helpful then. So what I try to do in each area, I send out a newsletter... And I, kind of you know, give people an idea of what's - just little snippets. They don't be big huge things, like. Just telling people what is going on in the area and how, if it's going to - you know, if there's a planning application in. I might have another one on the back of it "Here's the planning applications for the next five weeks" and I'd list them off and it gives people an idea of what's going on." (Councillor A)

Dublin City Council's assessment of its information strategies

In contrast to the assessments advanced by community representatives and councillors, Dublin City Council offered a very positive assessment of the measures taken to keep the community informed – relocation of its area offices into the community, the opening of a drop-in office, public meetings, greater circulation and visibility of personnel in the area.

"Now, we're in the area office, in the middle of the area that we're serving, if you like. We have our office here, which is smack, bang nearly in the middle of the 700 acre area and that's what we're here for. We're here as a project team to implement the Integrated Area Plan but we also have housing officers and we've a staff of twenty. And part of the reason Dublin City Council set up these area offices is that we would have more linkages with the communities that we're serving and to give them information on the range of services that we provide. There's a drop-in public office, in the event of any issues that they want to discuss. So, it's all part and parcel of our day's work is, you know, engagement with the community, if you like. And giving them information and then arranging and holding public meetings, be they during the day or at night, to discuss issues with the local residents. So, it's part of our brief, as I see it, and everybody in the office really is on board with that, you know. We're in and out and we're around the area, up and down. We know it inside out at this stage. Some of us are always, kind of, moving - going meeting people about some issue, you know. So, it's just our job and we get on with it." (DCC official)

The specific measures taken to involve the community in the formulation of the IAP at the outset were described:

"... from the information that I have, there was, you know, flyers sent out to local communities, there was meetings held, there was a public notice in the papers inviting submissions and there was widespread consultation for a couple of years before the plan was actually prepared. And this was in accordance with guidelines that were issued by the Department of the Environment at the time. So, the plan was prepared following those guidelines and dealing with local communities about their concerns and the issues and what they felt should be in the plan." (DCC official)

Dublin City Council's involvement in the Four Cities Project was included in such measures.

"That was really about community participation in urban regeneration... I was involved in that now as well. This was for the Liberties area, like, it was for the Liberties area. And [named community representative] and people like that were involved. And they were, when you talked about education there, they were brought down to the planning counters and shown how to look at a planning file and how to read them and the timescales for making submissions and all that, you know... And, you know, where plans were available for, you know, examination and all that. The planners were there, showing them, talking them through the files, like you know, that the elevations, the design and the layout and, you know, all the different aspects of a planning file." (DCC official)

As the implementation of the Liberties/Coombe IAP progressed, Dublin City Council reported varying degrees of success in engaging the wider community.

"...we tried at one stage to have a general meeting with community groups, just generally about the IAP, but two people showed up for it! So, it didn't seem to, kind of, get their interest if you're talking general issues. You need to be talking specifics, be it a housing project or conservation project or a framework plan... And then our engagement with the community was also - we've produced this information [a newsletter]. It's 'Talking Liberties Coombe' it's called and it gives information about all the different projects and plans and proposals... So, that's circulated throughout the area, like, you know, to businesses and to residents and to communities." (DCC official)

Other parties within the community took issue with such self-serving assessments, characterising Dublin City Council's attempts to inform the wider community as inadequate and entirely inappropriate for the target inner-city audience. Public displays appear to have attracted the more affluent sections of the population only.

"They [Dublin City Council] do hold displays. One of the urban design framework plans was displayed, for example, in the St. Nicholas of Myra Centre. Dublin City Council also staged a display of their proposed traffic cells in our [SWICN] offices. But it is young thirty-something mothers from the more affluent parts of the area that tend to attend these displays as opposed to longstanding working class residents. Is it enough to do that? Does that satisfy the requirement to inform communities? It's estimated, for example, that 50% of people living in this area have literacy difficulties, not to mention the many other immediate problems that people have to grapple with every day before their thoughts can turn to planning proposals and planning displays." (Former Policy Analyst)

Those who worked closely with the community representatives also took issue with the commendations heaped upon the much acclaimed Four Cities Project. If Dublin City Council was happy to encourage participation in an educational arena operating at a remove from planning proper, that commitment does not appear to have carried over for those who went on to enter the planning arena proper.

"The 'Four Cities' project was interesting. They seemed to have a lot of money at their disposal, which I have no difficulty with. But, it appeared to be operating in a very separate sphere from the IAP. The community representatives that I was working with were engaging with an urban renewal project for real but remained completely bereft of resources. Dublin City Council refused again and again to provide funding for the community representatives on the IAP Monitoring Committee – funding that would have enabled them to engage with the vast array of very technical issues at stake in the implementation of the IAP. They very clearly weren't going to assist the emergence of any informed or critical perspective and representation among that inner-city community." (Former Policy Analyst)¹

It is interesting to note that Dublin City Council considered a repeat involvement in any such 'training and research' programme as the Four Cities Project unlikely. While it may have located its offices and its personnel into the area, it did not intend investing in further training

or education for the host community. Citing shortage of resources as a difficulty, it also pointed to the fact that all such information was now easily and publicly accessible in any case.

"Well I suppose, it's about resources and it's about time and, you know, everybody's, kind of, busy doing their own, kind of, thing. I know I said earlier that we're a part of the area and all that but, you know, you only have X amount of resources too, you know. And if it's a training and research thing for local communities, it would be stretching us, I'd say now, you know. Unless somebody like the EU was willing to fund it again and we could get staff... I think nowadays, like you know, there's so much information there... Even on the website, like you know. If people want to learn about Dublin City Council, like you know, or learn about processes, you know, it's all there, like. Nothing is held back anymore, like you know, you can get copies of planning files, you can get copies of everything." (DCC official)

However, the level of access to web-based material from within a highly disadvantaged urban area is likely to be very limited and available to most only through commercial internet cafés.

Community Access to Planners and Other Officials

Of the four community representatives consulted, only one believed that the community enjoyed good access to planners and officials.

"I have always found that - I've generally worked with the Manager of the IAP or I've worked through the Area Manager. And in 90% of the time, I've got the information or report, whatever I've asked for or an explanation of some kind or another." (Community Representative C)

This lone community representative was joined in this positive assessment by the local traders' representative and a councillor.

"Yeah, very good and they were always very helpful." (Local Traders' Representative)

"If I wanted to, I could [access planners and officials], yeah. I mean, if I was stuck, yeah. There's no problem me lifting up the phone and looking to speak to one of the planners or architects and asking questions. And I'd often go in to the planning desk and, if I'd a problem, I'd cart myself upstairs and look to see somebody that could explain it. So, no! I mean, they are very open to assistance, they are, yeah. I have to give them that." (Councillor A)

While the other councillor did not dispute the access that communities may technically enjoy to planners and officials, he suggested that the knowledge differential between the two parties rendered that access meaningless. In seeking accurate information, the individual was highly dependent on a complex corporate structure.

"The community can arrange a meeting with the Corporation but it's knowing what questions to ask. I remember twenty years ago, the roads section, and depending who went in to them, they'd have three different sets of maps. And depending who went in and depending the question you asked, you'd get a map that mightn't necessarily be the answer you wanted. They wouldn't be telling a lie, they'd be showing you a map but it wouldn't be actually what you wanted. And you'd go away satisfied that your concerns had been met or you'd have no worries at all but you'd end up looking at things differently." (Councillor B)

Others pointed to the very perfunctory manner in which the community was accorded access to planning personnel.

"I mean, a good example was a couple of years ago, there was supposed to be a consultation around developments in Dolphin House. They put the plan in the library for a month but they never told anybody it was there. So, nobody saw it and nobody put anything into it. Now we raised that and they, you know - It has taken a different shape since. They didn't go ahead

with that. But, it's the method of going about it! It's constantly the top-down, rather than the bottom-up. And we're trying to say 'Do it from the bottom-up, let people take ownership and then it will be much more helpful. Because then they will be supporting you in it and they will be going along with you'. But, I don't know." (Community Representative D)

There were other and more apposite questions which might be considered in tandem with the question of whether community groups enjoyed good access to planners and officials – the factors upon which access was dependent; the case for securing independent technical advice; the degree of access enjoyed by elected representatives; the presence of vested interests around the Monitoring Committee table.

Factors influencing access to planners

It appears, for example, that it was easier to gain access to planners and officials when a non-confrontational personal approach was adopted.

"I don't have personally necessarily a problem in getting access. I'm probably less confrontational. I'll get my point across but I'm not a conflictual or confrontational man, in many ways. So, they probably don't feel that...I'm [not] going to grab them by the neck or whatever, if I do meet them or abuse or curse at them on the phone. But I think you're talking about then two different ways of accessing. One, sometimes is done on a personal basis." (Community Representative B)

That same access could effectively be denied when community representatives attempted to engage Dublin City Council in an official capacity.

"Any time that you were doing anything in an official capacity, they withdrew and usually said that it'll have to be checked with their legal department. We sent them one document, a fairly... detailed document... Like, the amount of paper work! I don't know whether you've got any of the paper work that we've been involved with? But, you're talking actually huge documentation. Any documentation we sent them, was sent to their legal department. And what we got back was usually, maximum, three or four paragraph reply, not answering any of the questions that we actually asked. So, in answer to your question of access and accountability, no, I wouldn't say that there was much access or accountability given back by Dublin City Council. It's when we got technical! And that's not us being technical but when we used people out there who were willing to give us advice and we used their knowledge around the technical points. We were never answered fully." (Community Representative B)

Whether or not individual community representatives had a personal predilection for oppositional stances, confrontation and conflict became unavoidable in a forum whose role and function Dublin City Council continually declined to specify.

"That was a two-way process and I would have to put my hands up to that. I think that was bred and, going back to the original question that I asked, the original request for the terms of reference or what boundary we were operating under as a committee. If that had have been very clear from the outset, a lot of the confrontation would have not been entered into. There wouldn't have been any need. Because we'd have known it was non-negotiable, what was happening. Whereas we felt that anything that was up for grabs was negotiable. But to our cost, we found out that wasn't the instance." (Community Representative B)

Access to independent technical advice

While community representatives readily admitted the need for technical advice, there was a clear reluctance to trust the advice of the local authority's planners or architects.

"... and around the specifics around planning and objections and so on and so forth, we asked for the facility of an independent planner or architect to be made available. Because we're not planners, we're community workers. I manage a local drugs programme. I'm involved in community work but I'm not a planner or a developer or anything like that. So to have that type of facility available, possibly some objections and some of the arguments or

debates that we had, if it had have been properly explained to us what was happening, some of these may not have occurred. But, because sometimes when you're dealing with Dublin City Council, if it's their planner, if it's their developer or if it's their architect who's actually telling you what's going on, you're that little bit hesitant to believe them, from previous experiences." (Community Representative B)

For community representatives, the question was not whether they enjoyed good access to planners or which approach would most likely solicit the technical advice required but whether any such contact was desirable in the first instance. Local authority planners and officials were understood by some to be so constrained and compromised by their organisational position to a degree that rendered any approach to them redundant.

"There are people in the City Council, I know that I wouldn't go near them for nothing. I wouldn't waste my time. There are other people in the City Council that I know have still respect for me, strange as it may seem. They don't agree with me but they do respect me and believe that I'm an honest person, as honest as can be! But they're powerless because their promotion and their comfortable working is at stake, if they raise their head above the parapet and they don't do it. But to me, that's a wrong way to operate." (Former Community Representative A)

There was agreement on this point. Even had community groups enjoyed access to Dublin City Council officials and planners, they would have felt obliged to refuse that advice in favour of independent counsel.

"When individual community representatives raised very, very legitimate issues, they treated them with disrespect, they didn't give them the information they needed to perform their monitoring function, they refused all requests for resources and they isolated them. Initially, we would have been happy to avail of the advice of Dublin City Council's own architects or planners. They always said that expertise was available but it never seemed to be. But after a certain stage, it became clear that even if they had allowed us access to their in-house expertise, that it would have to be refused and that independent advice was now necessary. I don't think there was any basis on which we could have accepted their experts' advice as factual or objective. There was a very, very strong case for independent expertise and you need hard finance to access that kind of expertise. Dublin City Council never, ever, ever conceded that fact." (Former Policy Analyst)

While some community groups were already eschewing Dublin City Council officials in favour of independent expertise, others were left without access to technical advice beyond that available from a single independent community planner whose working brief encompassed the entire inner city.

"... there've been external architects engaged by a number of community groups, I know in Bluebell and - To try and help them when they're doing community amenities, so that they have some kind of independent voice or expertise. They're not just always depending on the Council. (Community Representative D)

"We don't have any access to independent technical advice. The only planner that we have worked with has been [named individual, Community Technical Aid]. She remains the only independent planner whose services are available to inner-city communities." (Former Policy Analyst)

At a time when the middle and professional classes appeared to have left poor working class communities to their own devices, there was a sense that this inner-city community confronted the state and the private development sector in a considerably more vulnerable position than previous decades when professional advice appeared to have been within its reach.

"...the group I was involved in [in the 1970s] would have been the Liberties Association and we were a local group who had engaged an architect and who would have had other sympathetic professionals helping us. I always argued with local people that there was no use being in opposition to things, that you just had to provide alternatives. And you needed to stand up to the officials, you needed to have professional backing. Get the professionals to - like we did about 'houses not flats' we got the professionals to say 'They're right! Houses would be better than flats'. So, that's what we did, we had these planners in. (Councillor B)

The resources necessary to act on such a conviction had not however materialised. Inner-city communities were to find that independent professional planning expertise would remain beyond their means.

"...some of the ideas I had from the Liberties Association - I was only a member of the Liberties Association - but some of the ideas I had from that time, I tried to get the SWICN to get involved in. A plan came up for the whole of the area and then I was trying to get them to debate matters and I wanted to try to get them to engage a planner but I didn't succeed in getting one because they had no money." (Councillor B)

In any event the state may not have been prepared to countenance any plans, proposals or criticisms from inner-city communities that ran counter to its own plans, irrespective of whether or not such proposals carried the imprimatur of professionals. This had been clearly revealed in the case of the St. Michael's estate regeneration plan.

"I'm on the Task Force for Michael's Estate, as a politician. And for a couple of years we had argued - or the community had come to me and said would I support them, when they were looking for technical assistance from the Corporation. And they came to this meeting several years ago and I backed them up and they got technical assistance. Then, over a period of two years, they worked on a plan that would be the residents' plan and some of the houses were built. But the main plan, where Michael's Estate is at the moment, the high rise, that was to be demolished and the plan jointly agreed by the community and the Corporation was to be put in place. And here at the beginning of this year, we were told that the Department of the Environment had shelved the plan and that you'd have to have PPP, public private partnership. So while that worked, in that you got support, technical assistance, you came up with a plan that everyone agreed to and yet, it wasn't implemented because the Department of the Environment didn't want it. So you had all the assistance you wanted then, everyone said the plan was great, there was nothing wrong with it. But it didn't work for that one." (Councillor B)

Access enjoyed by other members of the Monitoring Committee

In a corporate culture in which many believe the exercise of real power to be withdrawing further and further into the ranks of the officials, it is interesting to consider the position of 'technically sovereign' councillors vis-à-vis officials (Cockburn, 1977: 36-7) within the Liberties/Coombe IAP. It was suggested, for example, that councillors may also have found themselves at a distinct position of disadvantage vis-à-vis planners.

"But, I believe that - some of the councillors, it's not that easy, you'd nearly want to be a planner yourself at times or you'd want to be very concerned about community affairs because there's so many things a councillor has to do." (Councillor B)

Unlike community representatives, elected representatives did enjoy avenues not available to the unelected and chose to make their views known through such channels rather than the planning objections and appeals process.

"At the south-central area committee meeting, they would show some of the developments that were proposed and then I would make my view known to the officials." (Councillor B)

If they did enjoy greater access to decision-makers within such forums, it did not however issue them into the ranks of the decision makers.

"But, as you know, city councillors do not make the decision, the decisions are an executive function." (Councillor B)

Vested interests on the Monitoring Committee

Attention was also directed to other interests around the Monitoring Committee table enjoying considerably greater access to the local authority's planners and officials. In some cases ostensibly independent interests turned out to have considerable interests vested in the affairs of Dublin City Council.

"For instance, there was a fella called [named individual] who was an architect, he was nominated by the RIAI or whatever you call their association, I can't remember the letters. But, he sat there and during all the early days, when I was arguing what I've said to you today, he never once came in support of me. And it was only when things got really bad and I began to trade insults with them that at that stage, he suddenly woke up and he told me 'I'm tired listening to you here. You have an agenda and it's only your own agenda that you're pursuing'. And I said 'Look, I would be the first to admit I have an agenda. My agenda is to get what was agreed to in the Integrated Area Plan implemented on behalf of the people in this area'. So, I accepted that's an agenda. But, what he never told me was he had an agenda. I now find out that there's a plan put together for St. Michael's Estate and it's not the one that the people in St. Michael's agreed to. The people in St. Michael's Estate were funded to put up a plan. They were told that plan is not a runner. A new plan has been put up and who has put the plan together? So, [named individual] has put a plan in, which I have no doubt he has been very well paid for, for City Council property to be privatised. And if that's not an agenda, what is? He shouldn't have been sitting monitoring an IAP that was drawn up by the City Council, when he had previously carried out work on behalf of the City Council and now he is carrying out work that's going to privatise City Council land." (Former Community Representative A)

Those with the largest financial stake in the urban renewal of the Liberties meanwhile absented themselves from such public *fora* and appeared content to work through other channels behind the scenes. Community representatives were left to guess at the scale, content and import of meetings between the public and private sectors. In some cases, the outcome of such discussions did not surface in the public arena until such time as the local authority invoked its compulsory-purchase powers to assist private developers in assembling sites. Elected representatives would frequently be apprised of such developments by the person upon whom the CPO had been served. Working outside the parameters of the Monitoring Committee and the planning system proper, it was also apparent that developers were approaching councillors to enquire about the likely fate of planning applications.

"I would say, like, some of the developers would have contacted me about different plans that they put in and asking, you know kind of, how did I think that they would go down in the area. Most of them, I told them 'You should go back to the drawing board on a lot of it'." (Councillor A)

Dublin City Council's attitude to community's concerns

Those with an involvement in planning dating back to the 1970s did not offer a very positive assessment of Dublin Corporation's earlier attitudes towards community concerns or community intelligence. They cited the Council's refusal to engage with community concerns at that time about the design of local authority flats (a refusal which was to incur significant costs for the national exchequer) as evidence of such indifference.

"Incidentally, the ones [the local authority flats] in Chamber Street, which are only about thirty years built, they're knocking them down now... we felt that the design of the flats weren't suitable. But they're knocking them down now and the houses on the Coombe, built five years later, are in great demand. So, had they listened to local people, they would have saved themselves a lot of problems." (Councillor B)

More recently, Dublin City Council's refusal to recognise local knowledge of the area's archaeological heritage resulted in significant delays in the completion of the Cork St./Coombe Bypass.

"One extraordinary thing at the CPO hearing, I was there - [named community representative] was there for the entire time - and I was concerned about the Coombe bypass and it was going through a grave yard. I said it was a graveyard and they said it wasn't a graveyard, the graveyard was behind the church. And it was recorded, like the way you're recording this... There's a written record of it but there was a recording of it as well. Then two years ago an archaeologist was talking about the delay in the Coombe bypass and she said one of the reasons for the delay was that there was a graveyard we didn't know about. And [named individual] was at the meeting with me and [named community representative] said: 'Well, I have the CPO report here with me and I can show you exactly what [other named individual] said at the meeting'. And it was in black and white: 'There's a graveyard on this site'. So, they weren't really listening. They wanted to put a road there and they were going to put a road there." (Councillor B)

At a time when Dublin City Council appears intent on incorporating all parties and interests within its partnership structures, it is interesting to consider the way in which it has responded to the concerns of inner-city communities which it has invited to participate within those same partnership forums. In the main, its response appears to have been defensive, dismissive and derisory.

The first of those concerns to arise in respect of the Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan was Dublin City Council's failure to furnish the Monitoring Committee with terms of reference governing its role and function.

"I asked at the very first meeting of the IAP for terms of reference. What was the terms of reference? It was myself who asked and I can recollect that meeting, when it took place and the actual statement I made: 'Could we have terms of reference that we could work under?' Six years later, those terms of reference still aren't actually in place and I think that is one of the major flaws of how the IAP operated. Because if you can operate from a document and the only document that you are operating was the Department of the Environment's guidelines for Integrated Area Plans, which were always misinterpreted - to us misinterpreted, from what we read in them, to what the councillors or Dublin City Council read into them. They switched and chopped and changed to suit themselves. When we brought up something that was a guideline and our interpretation of it, we were always told that 'No!', that we had a wrong interpretation of it. That it was a guideline and it was always superceded by the Council." (Community Representative B)

Growing unease about this and other issues in the first year of the IAP's implementation led the SWICN to convene a conference on community gain within the Integrated Area Plans. The issues discussed during that conference were to form the basis of a report which the community formally presented to the then City Manager in the following year - *A Mandate for the Community Representatives to the Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan* (Brudell, 2000).

"At the end of the first year of their involvement in the IAP, community representatives were starting to have concerns that the community gain wasn't going to materialise, that the social and economic gains weren't going to materialise. So, they held a conference.... [Afterwards] I began to collect the papers and I began to speak with the three community representatives in the area at that time. In speaking with them, it became clear that their concerns about social and economic gains were entirely legitimate. The community's stake in the plan appeared to be diminishing by the day. But, in speaking with them, what became of greater and greater interest to me was the actual structures through which the IAP was being implemented and the way in which the community representatives were being treated within those structures. "...we held a conference, a round table kind of conference, to point out about community gain and what we wanted out of community gain. She [named individual, SWICN Policy Analyst] documented everything that came out of that conference. Then we made a presentation, a

mandate document. She drew up, after a tremendous amount of work and research... a document that was to give the SWICN representatives on the IAP a mandate on how we were to work. In that mandate document, we pointed out all the faults that we had found so far and we offered constructive criticism and solutions that would solve the problem of where we were at. In other words, we were saying that we wanted some resources, let it be either financial resources to buy in our own expertise or to be provided with expertise, so we could deal with the arguments that were going on...we presented it to the City Manager, he took that and he said 'It's all out of date. It's all old hat. It doesn't apply. We've already put the remedies in place'. They had done no such thing." (Former Community Representative A)

The City Manager's seeming dismissal of the report's findings and recommendations at its launch stood in sharp contrast to the overwhelming consensus and endorsement with which other community representatives across the inner city had greeted its publication.

"We invited [City Manager] to formally receive that report at its launch. He stood up and he said something like 'Well done. You've done an awful lot of work, but it's all old news' - or something to that effect. He was very polite but he dismissed it ... That report incidentally had received the endorsement of community representatives engaged in the implementation of IAPs right across the inner city but such a fact was of no import to the City Council or its chief executive... That to me was the first indication of the actual value that Dublin City Council placed on community participation." (Former Policy Analyst)

Its refusal to engage with the community's proposals was understood to be the response of a very defensive agency.

"I think the work we did on the community gain document, which challenged Dublin City Council and other elements of the IAP, was totally under-valued because it was looked upon as being a criticism rather than an observation of what was actually happening. And I think that's where the fault lay. Both the City Manager, whom I don't have any problems with, I get on well with [named individual, City Manager], felt it as a criticism of the work being done rather than an observation. And I think that's where the fault lay, with them. They looked upon it as criticism and got a little bit stuck up about it, whereas we just looked at that as observations being made by the community of what was happening and our perception of what should have happened." (Community Representative B)

That same defensiveness would also be evident on subsequent occasions when the community representatives had reason to submit further critical questions to Dublin City Council.

"I think they took affront to our questions, if it challenged their professionalism... I think they took that as an affront to their professionalism being questioned." (Community Representative B)

Differing interpretations of Dublin City Council's seeming indifference

Some community representative advanced a more benign view of Dublin City Council's failure to engage with the community's concerns, suggesting that it was simply incapable of anything other than an academic understanding of the community's concerns.

"I think they work in a vacuum...It's like putting... an academic person, a great mathematician say for example, and putting him into a shop to count up money all day. They couldn't do it! Do you know what I mean? It would be too foreign for them even though they're supposed to be good at that particular thing...You can find another analogy but if you understand what I mean. It's like you can have a professor of economics but put him... out in the real world to try and deal with it - he's only dealing with theory all the time, he's never dealing with practice. And that's the difference between planners and the community. That's a good explanation, in my experience, anyway." (Community Representative C)

That same ineptitude was also read as the indifference of officials who did not reside in the areas in which the full impact of their planning decisions would be felt.

"And even though the officials from Dublin City Council came in and would try and explain why certain things happened such as the planning, you know, the height and density - Because I didn't know or understand about height and density, for example, and they came and explained it to us and why it was necessary in Dublin city and blah, blah, blah. And yet, we were trying to explain to them, you know 'That's fine for you to say but you don't live in the area and if you lived in the area, you would understand the outcome of some of these planning decisions', you know. And it didn't make rhyme or reason." (Community Representative C)

Others observed a very clear rationale in Dublin City Council's apparent indifference to the community's views. What community representatives might have experienced as a disconcerting discourtesy was understood as an inadvertently honest admission of the real standing in which community's representatives were held.

"I think that City Council are very, very happy to consult, I think they want to have community representation around the table. They made several commitments to that in very positive language – words to the effect that it was 'a vibrant, diverse community sector whose expertise must be harnessed and must be part of the implementation of the plan.' But faced with the full import of an informed, engaged, critical community delegation that was not prepared to acquiesce with plans that it understood to be detrimental to the area, it shut down. Dublin City Council made no attempt to harness the community expertise and vibrancy which it had trumpeted repeatedly in its publications... Once the community representatives began to become critical of the way the plan was being implemented and to critique Dublin City Council's behaviour, City Council's position changed completely. That's a summary statement of a very carefully considered position because we've documented our position so often and in such detail in print. I think that the inclusion of community representation within the Monitoring Committee of the IAP was intended to provide the implementation of the IAP with a semblance of democracy only – with a facade." (Former Policy Analyst)

Beyond providing a semblance of democracy to proceedings, it was suggested that Dublin City Council had also sought to dupe the community's representatives. This point was made with particular reference to its presentation of the urban design framework for Cork St./the Coombe.

"...the community felt and I would have felt like this although I wasn't a community representative on it but I was supporting them as a councillor at the meetings, I'd support them. And they were really saying 'What's the point of being here? We're not getting anything out of it. And we don't want high rise and we're getting it. We were told at the CPO hearing for this area that the height in Cork Street wouldn't go beyond a certain height and now we're told that it will...' At the CPO hearing, it was stated that the height wouldn't be above a certain height, you know, there would be a certain standard. But, secretly, I knew myself that they base heights on the width of the road. So, they had widened Cork Street three times or four times its existing width. And so they could use an excuse: 'Well, this street can take this height, you know'. But people who were originally - when they spoke about Cork Street, they were talking about Cork Street as it was. So, the people were really conned, you know." (Councillor B)

Those endeavouring to engage with the full import of the IAP were aware that the urban renewal programme represented just one facet of central government's renewed interest in inner city areas. As they also attempted to grapple with the advent of public-private partnerships in the social housing arena, they became increasingly aware of the vulnerability of poor and unorganised working-class communities in the face of what they perceived to be a highly-organised and coordinated state and private development sector. That concern was heightened by the attitude of senior local-authority officials to those inner-city communities which had become sufficiently well organised and mobilised to assert their concerns.

"Tenants First⁵ made a presentation outlining its concerns and questions to City Council in April. Dublin's City Council's response, while not entirely frank, was very interesting. The councillors claimed not to have been informed of the moves towards public-private partnership in social housing. [Named individual, Assistant City Manager], whose department was responsible for promoting PPPs, responded to the community's very serious concerns about a document that he had circulated outlining the Council's plans in respect of PPPs with a 'not at all. It's just something myself and the girls in the office thought up one day and we put it out for discussion!'" (Former Policy Analyst)

The question of whether local authority officials take community concerns seriously was, in any case, understood to be beside the point in an corporate culture in which planners appeared to be taking their orders from management.

"Corporation officials are professional, they are not duds, you know. I've learned that, they are not duds. But, they follow instructions as well, you know, they're told to do it. If a road engineer is told to put a road anywhere, he'll do so. He'll be able - he'll be technically competent. It's not his argument that it's against the environment or not. He's told to build a road." (Councillor B)

DCC regard for community concerns

In contrast to the above experiences, community representatives also identified particular circumstances in which Dublin City Council had been responsive to their views and concerns – those instances in which a sufficiently mobilised community had presented and pressed its concerns and questions publicly.

"As part of the IAP, we got involved in the review of an urban framework plan proposed for the Francis St., Meath St., Thomas St. retail area – a plan which would have proved seriously detrimental to the interests of those living in public housing in the area. We assisted local residents in putting their concerns and questions into print – questions which were posed at a public meeting as person after person stood up to put their questions and objections to City Council officials and planners. We understand that the plans for the social housing complexes within the plan area were subsequently withdrawn – an indication of the way in which community interests can be defended when a community is sufficiently informed, engaged and mobilised to defend its interests." (Former Policy Analyst)

In another instance, the adoption of a public and confrontational stance proved particularly successful for one national school in the area.

"One of the publicly owned sites along the route of the proposed Cork St./Coombe Bypass was promised to St. Brigid's National School for a new school building. Without advising the school of its plans, Dublin City Council put the site on the market. The school responded with a series of public meetings and a street protest to the planned sale and privatisation of the site. Dublin City Council reversed its decision. That site will now go to the school as originally planned. That stands as one of the few notable successes for the community." (Former Policy Analyst)

In an engagement in which the community had secured very few victories, it is interesting to note that the local authority was not prepared to accept that its *volte-face* on this site had had anything to do with the public campaign mounted against its plans. An entirely different account of Dublin City Council's public capitulation on this issue was provided by a DCC official which, he maintained, had been acting in the school's interest from the start:

"...there was a site down beside St. Luke's Church, beside St. Bridget's School, which we actually put on the market for sale. And really, it was with a view to getting the school to move. About taking the site from us and moving it forward for building. So, it became a, kind of, a topical issue for a while. It was on the radio a few times about it. But, the OPW bought

⁵ An independent forum of local authority tenants and community workers

the site from us but now they still have to - Funding has to be provided for the construction of the school, you know. But, it's reserved, if you like, for a school now, you know. But again, funding is an issue there. Like, there are hundreds of schools throughout the country looking for funding for new build and that's one of them and it's, kind of, stuck there." (DCC official)

In other circumstances where Monitoring Committee members had been content to confine their attention to specific details while accepting the overall thrust of proposed plans, they also found Dublin City Council to be responsive to their concerns. Notably, this was the case for local business interests. While not adopting a confrontational stance, local traders espoused a degree of satisfaction about the way in which they have been able to defend their interests within the Monitoring Committee – interests not previously understood or appreciated by planners.

"...our stand-point going into the committee was to put forward our view of trading in the area, which we didn't think was well understood. Essentially, our view of trading in the area is that this cannot be treated as a local trading area, in that it has traditionally drawn people from outside the area. Particularly from the South Inner City nearby suburbs but also from whatever places are along the bus routes. And, therefore, whatever... plans were being made in relation to retail operations in the area had to take into account the fact that the retail population here was not just local and that if by, kind of,... limiting car traffic in the area or buses or whatever access to the area was cut off, that it wouldn't survive as a viable retail entity. We didn't think that that was well enough appreciated by planners or people in general so... this was one of the - one of our objectives was to get this across. I think we've been reasonably successful in that. Like, an instance where we would have felt that this was badly understood was in the framework document, the original framework document for the area. The retail content of that seems to envisage the future of the area as largely... tourist oriented, as we saw it. And that didn't accord with reality as it is or the future as we would see it.

Yes, I think people were taken seriously. I mean, within the context that the Corporation is operating to a plan and they weren't going to change the plan. But, like, certainly details could be changed. I felt the Corporation officials - I was very impressed with both their dedication to it and their competence. They...come across really very well. Even though they get blamed for everything!" (Local Traders' Representative)

However, such assessments on the part of the local traders' representative were accompanied by an awareness of the subordinate position occupied by members of the Monitoring Committee vis-à-vis Dublin City Council officials within the partnership.

"My perception would be that everyone, I mean, everyone was acting out of good faith but there was probably a good deal of looseness of language in the, kind of, in the way the idea was sold initially. When people talk about partnership nowadays, people envisage a partnership of equals. I remember some of my friends joining solicitors' offices and there was the concept of the junior partner and the senior partner. I think we were more into that in the IAP." (Local Traders' Representative)

Dublin City Council's assessment of its own responsiveness

Dublin City Council meanwhile advanced an entirely positive assessment of its responsiveness to community's views and concerns. A number of instances were cited in which Dublin City Council altered its plans in response to inputs from the community. It had, for example, altered the layout of the Cork St./Coombe Bypass in response to community representations.

"...their input was beneficial. For example, one thing that came out of it was that the new road scheme [Cork St/Coombe Bypass] that was proposed for the centre of the area, if you like. At that time, prior to '98, we were proposing a dual carriageway with a median strip in the centre but the local community's input changed that. And they felt that they wanted a single carriageway, so that people could have crossovers. And they felt it wouldn't be as divisive as

having a road with a central median strip in it. So, that's an example of changes that we took on board from the community." (DCC official)

On another occasion, it abandoned plans for a new social housing scheme of foot of community pressure exerted on local councillors.

"And, like, engagement with the local community took place then on a range of issues. If we had any specific project that we were progressing, for example, a social housing scheme which we had planned for this area here. We had a public meeting on it and invited the public to come, to make submissions on it. And as a result of that meeting, in fact, the social housing scheme didn't proceed because the community didn't like the mass and the bulk and the height that was proposed. So, it was changed as a result. The area councillors were lobbied by the community then and the area councillors didn't vote for the Part 8 process to commence on it." (DCC official)

DCC's Attitude to the Community's IAP Planning Concerns :

Engagement with the community on contested planning issues⁶

Dublin City Council's treatment of the community's concerns about the planning decisions being taken within the context of the IAP is best illustrated in its treatment of those community representatives who sought to hold the local authority to the commitments which it had given (Dublin Corporation, 1998, 125) about the physical form that the renewal of the Liberties would take.

Specifically, it is best illustrated in Dublin City Council's response to one community representative, supported by a community planner and community-based policy analyst, who sought to hold the Council to the mini-development briefs which it had outlined in respect of key tax-designated sites along the route of the Cork St./Coombe Bypass. In assuming such a mandate and responsibility, the community representative was operating in accordance with the stated function of the Monitoring Committee as outlined in the 1999 Urban Renewal Scheme Monitoring Guidelines (see Guideline 2.6).

The one community representative who undertook to engage with the planning permissions being granted in respect of individual tax-designated sites was to learn that his residents' association's confidence in Dublin City Council's word had been misplaced. Following the lodgement of the first applications on tax designated sites along the route of the Cork St./Coombe Bypass, his association found itself on a steep learning curve on the Irish planning system and the *realpolitik* of planning and urban renewal.

"I was happy enough until the very first planning application that was made. It was at the corner of [named street] and [named street], next door to where I live myself... I live in a cottage that is on the boundary wall of that site. Now, under the urban design framework that they had drawn up, they swore that there would be 58 apartments on that site if it was developed one way or 52 if it was developed a different way. The 58 meant incorporating an extra house that was still occupied. The developer would have to buy that house. So, 52 or 58 and 200 square meters of commercial development and they were very specific in saying that three stories would be the maximum height that anything could be developed on the site. When they put in the planning application, there was no argument on the 52. They had bought the other house and they were now looking for 58. So, I had no argument with that, they were looking for 58 apartments. That was fine. Instead of 200 square meters of commercial development, they applied for 1,200, which was six times as much commercial development. And in order to get that much on to the site, they had to go five storeys high, instead of three storeys.

So, on the voluntary [Monitoring] committee, I pointed out - I said "Look, it's in breach of the Integrated Area Plan itself, it's in breach of the City Development Plan. And you people all swore that they wouldn't get the tax incentives unless they developed it in line with the brief and now you're proposing to give planning permission or you're listening to their arguments". And the first thing that they said was none of them could remember. And there was six or

⁶ For an in depth review of the chronology and significance of events relating to contentious planning issues see Brudell, Hammond and Henry, 2003.

seven Corporation officials in the room, of varying professions, but none of them could remember swearing that they had said that, unless it was developed in line with the urban design framework, they wouldn't get the tax incentives.

Now, my memory is bad! I'm the first to admit it, I'm hopeless! But nevertheless, it had stuck in my head and I said 'No! I know I'm right'. And I argued it and it went on and on and on, until I became persona non grata. I was actually calling them liars or whatever word. I wasn't too parliamentary. I was near enough to saying 'You's are telling lies' and they were saying that I was a troublemaker and that I was saying things that weren't true. And then by accident, I found out that I could buy the verbatim report of the EIS study, where they swore. So, I went down and I bought that, I still have it at home. Now, when I produced that - because I didn't do it in a stupid way, I let the argument develop for a half an hour again at another IAP meeting and then I said 'Well, look, I know what I am saying is the truth because I've gone and bought this and there it is there and there's your name and there's what you swore to'. And the answer I got from [Senior Executive Planner] was 'That doesn't - the contemporaneous notes that I took at that hearing doesn't match with what you have written there'. So, I said 'Well, if that's your argument then, you have a position that you must challenge what's written in that. That [the transcript] was taken by a stenographer, who was supported by people taking notes, there was three or four of them. If what you took was different - and my memory agrees with all that. I don't know how none of you can remember it but I remember that. If that's your answer, then take it up with them and tell them that they are all wrong and that you are right', which never happened." (Former Community Representative A)

At this point, the community learned how rapidly Dublin City Council was prepared to jettison its newly-found *modus operandi* of conciliatory partnership. If community representatives objected to planning decisions taken within the context of the Integrated Area Plan, they were informed that they, as private citizens, were always free to resort to the Third Party appeals system and An Bord Pleanála. This direction was judged to be remarkably cynical and adversarial in light of the expensive obstacle which any poor working-class community would encounter in attempting to engage in the planning appeals process without either the necessary technical expertise or the financial wherewithal to purchase it.

"So, obviously, what they said to me then was 'Well, the planning application is in and what you can do now is object to the planning application'. But because I live there myself, I live next door and I was personally involved in it because it will do damage to me and it has done damage to me. But, I was a bit reluctant to take it on because I was saying 'they're going to say it's because you're living next door to it yourself. That's the only reason that you're objecting to this'. But, it was the first one and, in spite of that, my neighbours, with me, they wanted to object. So, I wrote out an objection and I based it on breach of the IAP and breach of the City Development Plan. And I said - I was certain - I said 'Look, we have nothing to worry about. I've been told at these [Four Cities] classes that I went to, that if you can demonstrate that these two things have been breached, planning permission wouldn't be given'. I couldn't believe it when they gave planning permission." (Former Community Representative A)

The community would also learn about the shifting hierarchy of planning documents invoked in determining a planning application – a situation rather more fluid than that outlined in the Four Cities Project.

"...the City Council said to us that, on the Monitoring Committee, they said 'Things have changed since the IAP. The Residential Guidelines have been brought in and they must be adhered to'. I said 'Look, guidelines are guidelines and that's all they are, guidelines. But the City Development Plan must surely outrank any guidelines coming in. What's laid down in the Development Plan is more than a guideline. What's laid down in the IAP is more than a guideline'. I said 'Even is what you're saying is right, even if the residential density guidelines do override' - or supercede is the words they used - 'the City Development Plan', I said, 'those guidelines came in over a year ago and you've never mentioned them to us here, as a Monitoring Committee. You never told us that now the plan that we are monitoring has been superceded by the Residential Densities Guidelines'. I said 'The least you should have done,

if what you're saying is true, is come along and said 'Look, you're all sitting down here monitoring a plan that has now gone out of date. It has been superceded by these guidelines and, therefore, we're going to have to have another look at all this'. That's the least you should have done' but I said 'You didn't do that' and I said 'The reason you didn't do that is what you are telling me is not the truth and it doesn't supercede the development plan'."
(Former Community Representative A)

The community had learned of Dublin City Council's decision to accord precedence to these guidelines over the agreed IAP through accidental sight of an Dublin City Council internal memorandum in an An Bord Pleanála file. When confronted with this memo, officials initially denied the import of the signed memorandum but subsequently appeared to have taken a decision to brazen it out.

"When I was researching going into An Bord Pleanála to find out what happened on that site, I went in, I read the Inspector's report and saw how it had been overturned. And on the file, I found a note from [named Senior Executive Planner], writing to the Inspector in An Bord Pleanála, signing the letter and saying that now the Integrated Area Plan had been superceded by these guidelines. I just want to be as accurate as I can, he had signed it, I'm not sure that he was the author of it. I think there might have been a planner called [named individual], but he as the senior planner had endorsed it and signed it. And when I got that and brought it into another Monitoring Committee meeting and I said 'Look, you did write - or you did sign this thing and it says that the IAP has been superceded. Now', I said, 'if you wrote that to an Inspector in An Bord Pleanála, why didn't you come here and tell us what you'd done?' And he denied that he had done it at first and I produced a copy of it. He then said 'Oh, I should never have signed that'. That was his first reaction. 'I should never have signed that'. By the following committee meeting, 'I should never have signed it' was never mentioned again, but what was said was that they do supercede it. That I was right in what I said, the IAP's been superceded. So, that was the beginning of a bad experience."
(Former Community Representative A)

Having surmounted the barriers involved in engaging in the planning appeals process, the community did not find An Bord Pleanála to be any more sympathetic to its concerns about the standing of the Integrated Area Plan.

"When I was objecting to An Bord Pleanála, I wrote that what I was saying would be borne out by reference to the Integrated Area Plan and I named the section, the Appendix - I think it was Appendix D⁷. I said this would bear out that what I was saying was the truth. And in his findings - he [An Bord Pleanála's Inspector] found partly in favour of us, by the way - but in his findings, he said that in the copy of the Integrated Area Plan that he'd been given, there was no Appendix D and he couldn't say that what I was saying was the truth. So, then I realised that what they [Dublin City Council] had done was, they realised their mistake. They gave a copy of the one with the Appendix in it to me and to other people but when they were giving it to inspectors of An Bord Pleanála, they didn't give them it all. I don't really know! I sent in two - when I was writing to the Inspector, I sent in photocopies of the pages underlined with the statements that, you know, were saying they swore this, that and the other. Nevertheless, that was their finding. But in spite of that, he [An Bord Pleanála's Inspector] found, I'd say, about 40% in our favour and 60% against us. And I thought that was the end of that but what I didn't know was that the Bord took his findings - I didn't know they could do this - they took his findings and they overturned his findings and they gave planning permission for everything that the developer had sought. And not only that, they had gone further. Anything that was going to cause any cost or hassle or problems to the developer was also taken out, such things as work hours, hours of work. In the City Council's grant of permission, they laid down hours of work that they could work. They lay down that they had to pay certain monies for donations towards this or money towards services. All these things were taken out.

⁷ The design specifications for the tax incentive site referred to were contained within Appendix D to the *Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan*.

The result is that he can work any hours that he wants to on that site and at times has been doing that. And the City Council officials now are telling me that the reason that that's happened there is because An Bord Pleanála took out the requirement - the enforcement of the hours wasn't included there. So, it was a very unhappy experience for somebody coming on. And, I swear to you, all I was trying to do was to monitor a plan that I thought we had agreed to, that was kind of an unwritten contract between the community and the City Council." (Former Community Representative A)

While Dublin City Council refused to acknowledge any binding contract with the community, it is interesting to note that at least one senior planning official did not agree with the manner in which the local authority had dispensed with the commitments given to the community. The then Chief Planning Officer within Dublin City Council accepted that the Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan represented an implicit contract with the citizenry. If a planning principle were 'laid down' and particularly if it were 'laid down' under oath, the Chief Planning Officer maintained that Dublin City Council should have honoured the principle and the implicit contract. Public officials should, he said, be obliged to 'account for their stewardship' (McDonnell, 2003).

In an environment in which such an obligation apparently did not pertain, the citizens in question were obliged to seek restitution through other available channels. Having exhausted all planning avenues, the courts provided the only remaining arena within which the community could seek the resolution of its planning concerns. Financial considerations ensured that this would not be an option.

The community looked on as the tax-designated site was sold on to a developer who submitted a new planning application and Dublin City Council and An Bord Pleanála further demonstrated its willingness to grant planning permission in contravention of the Integrated Area Plan and without reference to those whose residential amenity might be irreparably damaged by such decisions.

"While An Bord Pleanála's Inspector recommended a permission reducing the building height to a 4-storey building, the Executive Board of An Bord Pleanála overturned his recommendation to uphold Dublin City Council's permission for 5-storeys. The only option remaining then would have been a judicial review and there didn't seem to be a specific legal ground on which a review could be sought. That inner-city community didn't in any case have the finance to pursue that option. The site was subsequently sold on to the [named] company who lodged an application for a much bigger (five, six and seven storey) development – again, obviously, in breach of the IAP. It got planning permission and [Former Community Representative A] again appealed. Most of the detail of that planning permission was upheld by An Bord Pleanála in turn. While that development is now going ahead, it's not clear to [Former Community Representative A] which permission is being used or which conditions in relation to noise levels or hours of work obtain. Now he wakes up every morning and his house is shaking." (Former Policy Analyst)

The above engagement with the planning decisions taken in respect of one tax-designated site within the IAP provides as an illustration of the manner in which community representatives were treated when they sought to ensure that Dublin City Council adhere to the development briefs which it had outlined in respect of individual tax-incentive sites. It is also an illustration of the position of vulnerability and powerlessness of inner-city communities when seeking to challenge the plans of a wealthy private development sector with expert testimony at its disposal and a public sector possessing sweeping decision-making powers.

In accordance with the responsibility which he believed that he had assumed in undertaking to monitor the implementation of the Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan, one community representative and his residents association undertook to object to each planning permission in breach of the IAP along the route of the Cork St./Coombe bypass.

"So, every planning permission that came up in there after that - and I would argue it on the Monitoring Committee and say that 'This shouldn't be allowed'. They kept saying to me 'You

have the resolution of this in your own hands. Object to every one of the planning applications'. So, I said 'You're putting me into a position I shouldn't be in. I'm here as a member of the public, as a representative of a community and you're asking me to take on the problem, the trouble and the expense of trying to ensure that what's in that is carried out. And the only way I can do that is by taking on the task of objecting to every one of them and there's fourteen or fifteen sites'. And they said 'That's the position, either do that or keep your mouth shut'. So, I said 'Right, I'll do that'." (Former Community Representative A)

As he endeavoured to appeal each contested planning decision, he observed developers seeking building heights and densities far in excess of those specified in the Integrated Area Plan. On lodgement of each appeal, a familiar pattern began to establish itself whereby pressure to withdraw was exerted from both public and private sectors. On one occasion he was approached by a former government minister on behalf of private developers. More typically he received 'a barrage' of telephone calls from private developers.

In the case of one planning application in which a development company had sought increased building heights and densities, an alteration of land zonings attached to different segments of the site and the demolition of historic buildings in the curtilage of a listed building on the site, developers sought to engage the community representative in discussions about the future use of a publicly owned building. Any community access or use of the building in question was presented as being contingent on the community's withdrawal of its appeal. This approach like all others was refused and the appeal remained with An Bord Pleanála for adjudication. When An Bord Pleanála's decision was finally forthcoming, the community representative witnessed a virtual replication of the outcome of his first appeal.

"Now, this time again, An Bord Pleanála gave planning permission. And when I went down to get the Inspector's report this time... He [the Inspector] accepted that. He said no matter what way you try to twist it round, the zoning can't be overcome. The switching of the zonings, you can't justify. He wasn't happy about knocking down the buildings, which he felt were part of the curtilage. He found other things that I hadn't found, or we hadn't found and he turned the whole lot down flat. Again, the Bord took that Inspector's findings and overturned them completely.

So, that was my second experience of the planning system and, again, when I went back and I reported to the Monitoring Committee. I said 'Now, at least this time when I go back I can point out that I've been taken to a pub by [named developers], I've been asked to withdraw, I've refused, I've been offered a [named building] by [named developers] that they don't own, I've been told they'd refurbish it which is a condition and I turned all that down. At least this time, somebody will be horrified in the City Council and they'll say 'Jesus, this has gone a bit too far'.

Instead of that, I might as well have gone to the next Monitoring Committee meeting and said 'Tomorrow is Tuesday' because that's about as much shock that registered on any of their faces." (Former Community Representative A)

The community representative endeavoured to appeal each successive breach of the IAP along the route of the Cork St./Coombe Bypass but was obliged to concede that all planning objections and appeals were doomed to failure.

"I kept up the practice then of objecting to everything as far as I could because I hadn't enough money to be able to do what I really want to do. But with the help of [named individual, Community Planner] and [named individual, Community Policy Analyst], we wrote, I thought, excellent cases objecting to others but they all got the planning permission, no matter which way we wrote it. It didn't matter what the inspector found, it didn't matter what case you put up, they got their planning permissions anyway." (Former Community Representative A)

Decision not to endorse DCC's annual report

The 1999 Urban Renewal Scheme: Monitoring Guidelines required that “the local authority or authorised company should publish an annual report in respect of the twelve month period commencing 1 March each year. The annual report should be approved by the Monitoring Committee and submitted to the Minister for Environment and Local Government by 30 June each year” (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 1999).

At the end of second year of the IAP’s lifetime, community representatives decided not to endorse the annual report that Dublin City Council was obliged to submit to Department of the Environment. That decision was informed by each of the difficulties which the community had outlined in its earlier *Mandate* document - difficulties which had accelerated in the following year (see Brudell, 2002: 29).

The final decision to adopt a formal oppositional position to the manner in which Dublin City Council was implementing the Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan was taken on a number of very clearly stated grounds: (i) Dublin City Council’s continued refusal to engage in a meaningful manner with the findings and recommendations outlined in the Mandate report; (ii) concerns about Dublin City Council’s ability to deliver the range of ‘community gain’ objectives outlined in the Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan; (iii) Dublin City Council’s behaviour in pursuing their proposals in relation to the administration of the ‘community gain’ fund (iv) Dublin City Council’s refusal to provide the necessary information and clarification in response to the series of fundamental issues and questions posed in relation to the standing of the Integrated Area Plans (ibid. 36).

On the basis that the continued planning contraventions of the Integrated Area Plan went questioned the validity of the IAPs themselves and, on the basis that Dublin City Council’s failure to engage with the community’s serious concerns on this matter undermined the basis for continued community participation within the structures of the Liberties/Coombe IAP, the planning difficulties were presented as the ‘substantive issue’ (ibid. 31).

If the community representatives had assumed that the adoption of such a formal and public stance would oblige either the local or central state to engage with its concerns, it had overestimated its standing within the implementation of the Integrated Area Plan. The response from the Department of the Environment, which fundamentally undermined the authority and stated function of the Monitoring Committee, confirmed this fact.

"The Department has confirmed that the non-approval of the Annual Report has no implications for the Monitoring Committee." (Correspondence from IAP Project Manager, 2002).

The community representatives were then faced with two issues. They were no longer sure of the standing of either the Integrated Area Plan which they had been invited to monitor or the very mechanism instituted to monitor its implementation (Brudell, 2002).

Central government’s attitude to community concerns

Having exhausted all options and avenues within Dublin City Council for the resolution of their concerns, the community representatives took a decision to approach the Minister for the Environment and Local Government directly. They submitted a detailed Minority Report outlining the community’s questions and concerns under fifteen headings (Brudell, 2002: 38-45).

Under one of those headings, they sought a binding response to a series of questions which Dublin City Council had repeatedly refused to engage with - the precise standing of the Integrated Area Plans and the hierarchy of plans used in determining a planning application; the question of whether the management of Dublin City Council had made a policy decision to accord precedence to a guideline document over an agreed Integrated Area Plan; the standing of City Council’s policy on plans such as Integrated Area Plans and the inviolability of such policies (ibid. 42-3). It informed the minister that comprehensive answers to each of the questions outlined in the *Minority Report* would be necessary if community representatives were to be in a position to assess the continuing validity of the Integrated

Area Plans, and the value and legitimacy of continued community participation within the structures of the Integrated Area Plans.

The formal presentation of the community's concerns was greeted with the same indifference from central government as that meted out by local government as it became clear that the latter was operating with the imprimatur of the Department of the Environment. While the Minister for the Environment was never to engage with any of the questions posed, his department did finally inform the community representatives by letter that all matters raised were a matter for the local authority only.

"The Minister never, ever engaged with any of the fifteen questions put to him in our Minority Report. In the autumn of that year, a local TD tabled a parliamentary question on our behalf seeking a commitment from the Minister that he would engage with the questions put to him in this report... Based on that Dáil question, we received a response from his Junior Minister saying that, while community participation is valued etc, the interpretation of a particular IAP was in law a matter within the competency of the local authority and he declined to engage further. Two weeks later, we received a written response from the Department of the Environment to the same effect. That to me was the first honest admission that that inner-city community was never intended to exercise any authority or play any real role in the implementation of the IAP." (Former Policy Analyst)

In an environment abounding with rhetorical commitments to the importance of community participation, the response from the Minister's office, made the precise standing of the community within the Monitoring Committee abundantly clear for the first time. While the Minister regretted the "inability to reach consensus on the Liberties/Coombe IAP Monitoring Committee" his department pointed out that

"... under the legislation overall responsibility for the implementation of the IAPs, including its monitoring, rests with the local authority. The interpretation of the terms of a particular IAP, and the certification of individual projects as being consistent with the objectives of that IAP are, in law, matters within the competence of the local authority concerned, in this case Dublin City Council." (Correspondence from Department of Environment, 2002)

Although the Minister declined to engage any further, his letter did, nevertheless, assist two of the community representatives in reaching a definitive conclusion on the two fundamental issues on which they had sought clarification: the standing of the Integrated Area Plan which they were appointed to monitor and the standing of the mechanism instituted to monitor its implementation. After a three-year engagement in the implementation of a plan to which both had been fully committed, both formally resigned their seats.

Dublin City Council's rationalisation of the contested planning decisions

Dublin City Council accepted that planning and the changing status of the Integrated Area Plan constituted one of the community's core concerns. It also accepted that planning was the central issue upon which the decision to resign from the Monitoring Committee was taken. It refused, however, to accept any culpability on this issue.

"... the issue that came up with the members of the Monitoring Committee was in relation - was planning issues, basically... on the one hand, the IAP document in 1998 was very prescriptive, if you like. It talked about the heights that might go on particular sites. For example, it might have said here three to four storeys. But...by the time the planning applications got lodged, there was new residential density guidelines issued by the DOE, there was sustainable development guidelines issued as well by Government and they were looking for higher densities - the Bacon Reports, all those.

The densities on all these sites was going higher and higher, with the result that, in some cases, six to seven storeys was granted in a place that the plan said it would be maybe three to four storeys. And really, that's what became the issue. Because the community felt, when they were being consulted in the formulation of the plan, what they were looking for at that stage was three to four storeys. But, when the planning permissions were granted, both by City Council and An Bord Pleanála on appeal, they were higher and it was really to take

account of the change in circumstances that I mentioned, you know. And that was really the nub of the resignations, if you like.

The community referred to them as breaches of the IAP, which if you look at the letter of the thing, they were breaches, you know. But, we were trying to put forward the point of view that, you know, the plan is not set in stone. It's evolving all the time and we have to take account of new circumstances when planning permissions are granted..." (DCC official)

Despite investing the Monitoring Committee with a specific function in relation to "address[ing] any change in circumstances since the preparation of the IAP" (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 1999), Dublin City Council accepted that it had not established a procedure for amending the IAP to take account of any such changes in circumstances. If it did not judge such a formal procedure to be necessary in advance of the development of the Cork St./Coombe Bypass, it is interesting to note that it had produced an *ex post facto* new regeneration strategy for the contested route that would, it advised, 'supercede' the IAP. Such a regeneration strategy would presumably also provide retrospective ratification for planning decisions already taken. While Dublin City Council intended to invite community feedback on this document, it was clear that such feedback would be sought in respect of planning decisions already taken.

"It just evolved. We treated what was in the IAP as an advisory, kind of, guidance, rather than any statutory basis, yeah...There is a new document being produced now. It's called...a Regeneration Strategy for Cork Street and that does refer - that supercedes, if you like, the IAP insofar as Cork Street is concerned, as regards heights and the type of development that we see on it. And that's due to go for public consultation later on in the year, now. It's at draft stage at the moment and it's being printed up. And we'll be inviting comments on that from the local community and open it again. But, in a way, most of the planning stuff has been granted at this stage, you know, most of the major sites. There are others now, infill sites, that are coming on-stream but most of the tax-designated sites either have planning permission and are under construction or I think there's one with An Bord Pleanála still but most of them are granted at this stage." (DCC official)

Dublin City Council remained satisfied about the manner in which it had facilitated the community's participation in the implementation of the Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan. While acknowledging the community's opposition to planning decisions along the route of the Cork St./Coombe Bypass, such concerns appeared of little consequence beside professional determinations of 'proper planning.' Curiously all such planning decisions were deemed to be beyond the control of the Project Manager of the IAP who appeared to be primarily concerned with keeping the peace. Responsibility for actual planning decisions was abdicated to the professionals behind the scene.

"[On the question of whether Dublin City Council had achieved its aims with regard to facilitating public participation-] Well, I think so, like! I think if you are open and transparent with communities about what you want to do. Now, obviously, there are times when our view will conflict with what local communities want. For example, on the heights on Cork Street, there's no doubt the local community don't want the heights that are there. But in a way, the planning process is outside my control, as part of the project team. That's an issue for the planners to decide, to do recommendations based on current guidelines and current legislation. And at times, I'm caught in the middle because I'm trying to appease the local community by saying we're trying to get the area developed, you know quality development that's acceptable to them. But, on the other hand, the planners have their view of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and I can see where they're coming from." (DCC official)

Decision-making procedures within An Bord Pleanála and the right of its executive board to override its own inspector's recommendations without any indication of its rationale were understood simply as the way things were. If there was a difficulty, it appeared to reside in public access to documentation indicating internal dissent within An Bord Pleanála on the planning decisions in question.

"And like you know, it goes through a process. I suppose, An Bord Pleanála ultimately are the independent adjudicators on planning decisions and they uphold, or have upheld generally, our decisions along Cork Street. Now, sometimes that upholding of the decision was against the advice of their own Inspector. So, that has generated its own problems because the planning files are available for inspection now. The local community can get a copy of the Inspectors' reports in An Bord Pleanála and they can see that the Inspector might be recommending that a certain height be granted but the Bord have overruled that Inspector in certain cases. So, that's another conflict. And in a way, it's aggravating the local community all the more because, you know, they think there's something sinister there. That An Bord Pleanála are granting stuff against the advice of their own expert, if you like, their own Inspector. But, that's the system and there's nothing illegal about it. It happens all the time." (DCC official)

Despite the community representatives' having compiled numerous reports and position papers in the course of their engagement with the IAP and their having expended very scarce community resources in seeking a satisfactory resolution to their concerns, they considered that these efforts were received with little more than a dismissive attitude by Dublin City Council, highly reminiscent of the worst aspects of managerialist bureaucracy content simply to weather such criticism. In the wake of irreconcilable differences which led two of the community's representatives to resign from the Monitoring Committee, Dublin City Council declared all such concerns 'smoothed over.'

"[Named Community Representative] and one other person resigned all right. But one of the groups from SWICN are talking about coming back onto it again now, like, you know. So, that's an indication that, you know, there was an issue for a while but it's kind of smoothed over now, if you like. Or we've moved on from that, let's say more so, yeah. We'll just have to agree to differ on the things that caused conflict, let's put it that way." (DCC official)

Dublin City Council's attitude after community resignations

Following the withdrawal of Dublin City Council's harshest critics from the Monitoring Committee, including the only Community Representative who lived in the IAP area, the agenda for engagement between it and the remaining community representatives attained a markedly softer focus. In place of contentious confrontations over contested planning decisions, Dublin City Council appeared to have little more to worry about than the manner in which the community and statutory partners would relate to each other.

"There's only two community reps left now on it. So, the two of us had decided to go back to the Monitoring Committee and... ask them to acknowledge that there is a difficulty, there is a problem and, in order to you know resolve that problem, we need to agree how we will work together. And that if the community sector is saying something, that it's taken seriously and it's respected and various other things that had come up. So, we devised a set of principles to work by and this was agreed then by all the other members of the Monitoring Committee, that these were the principles which we would work by. So, these principles were to... cover all of those kind of issues that came up over the years. And so far this year, I have to say, it's been quite successful, you know. They have improved, you know. And we had sessions just to go through the principles and say 'What can I live with and what can I not live with?', you know, coming from the different backgrounds, from a councillor, from an official, from a business person, from a union rep. You know, 'What can I live with and what can I not?' So, we ironed all that kind of stuff out. Now, it has improved this year but then there haven't been any great challenges put to us this year so far, if you understand. (Community Representative C)

If Dublin City Council appeared willing to concede a series of principles of engagement over the substance of the hard critical questions previously pressed by the other community representatives, it remained clear that such a concession would not lead to radical alteration in its practice. The remaining community representatives anticipated that Dublin City Council would merely continue its previous practice of deferring the implementation of contentious plans until such time as any emerging opposition had been dissipated.

"[Named Community Representative] had left and we had to keep saying to them. Well I mean, [named Community Representative] gone and [named Community Representative] has gone. But that means, you know, you have to acknowledge they left. Just because they're gone doesn't mean we'll say 'We'll carry on as normal'. They left for a purpose so we have to address that purpose. And we did and we set up these principles to work by... you know, people should be truthful and honest and all the various things that... you don't say out loud, you assume, you know... In saying that, it hasn't improved practice per se anywhere. I'm working on a traffic cell thing at the moment so we'll see... how people feel about that. My experience has been that if people don't approve of something, they leave it lie for enough years. And then, when enough years pass by, then they'll come back to it and they can do it then because people get totally despondent. (Community Representative C)

Notwithstanding reservations about Dublin City Council's intentions to amend its practice, the remaining community representations once again 'signed off' on the Project Team's Annual Report to the Minister for the Environment. Dublin City Council's implementation of the IAP would once again carry the official imprimatur of the community.

"I'll give you a copy of last year's annual report if you're interested... as I say, for 2003 and that was approved by the Monitoring Committee in April of this year..." (DCC official)

Notably, neither of the remaining two Community Representatives resided in the area covered by the IAP.

Barriers to effective community participation in planning Information

The inaccessibility of information relating to the monitoring of the Integrated Area Plan was identified as a barrier to effective community participation. While the covert decision to accord precedence to a guideline document over an agreed IAP may have constituted the most significant informational barrier to community participation, it appeared to have been part of a broader practice to withhold information until such time as necessary decisions had been taken.

"...one thing that has to be recognised is that on the IAP, the community were at a very unfair disadvantage, in that the workers which would be Dublin City Council planners, managers or whatever were sitting around the table and we also had our employers sitting around the table, which would be the city councillors. Decisions would be made at a Dublin City Council meeting, which we didn't necessarily have access to. But then that Tuesday, it would be brought up at the IAP. Although we always were aware that we weren't a[t] the decision making process but we were supposed to be talking through stuff before a decision was actually made. They were telling us after the event.

Well, the difficulty we have - I mean, I had an example just very recently now the other day, where there's a plan being done for some areas here around Rialto and they were consulting with just one group, one small pressure group in the area. And I heard nothing about it and when I rang up and said 'As a member of the monitoring group, I'm supposed to know these things' and 'Ah well, this, that and the other. The plan will be prepared and put to the Area Committee⁸ and then we'll talk after that'. But, I said 'No! That's not the process! The process is you talk to local people first. You get their views and all that and you put it then to the Area Committee. Not the other way around!' It's either bottom-up or top-down and they tend to do it top-down. And there is that attitude, no matter how we try, of 'We know best', do you know? It's highly frustrating..." (Community Representative B)

In responding to the community's requests for information it was suggested that Dublin City Council had engaged in something approaching sharp practice on occasion. This point was made in relation to the ownership of a public building that private developers had introduced to their negotiations with community appellants.

⁸ Local Area Committee

"And it got to the stage then when I said 'A few months ago, I wrote to the City Council and I asked them to tell me the names of all the buildings and sites that they owned in the area' And I said 'The [protected publicly owned building in question] wasn't included as being owned by you'. And I said 'Why didn't you tell me during all the arguments we've had about this site, that you owned the [named building]?' 'You didn't ask!' So, I said 'Well, I didn't ask, but I could hardly be expected to take every building that's in the area and go in and say 'Do you own that?'" (Former Community Representative A)

In other cases, Dublin City Council neglected to inform the community of the full import of developments taking place within the IAP.

"I think the benefits should also be explained with the losses. Because it's not all benefits. It's great saying we're going to have these new buildings and so on and so forth. New buildings don't necessarily bring the benefits that the community wants. (Community Representative B)

In the midst of concerns about information not making its way into the public realm, one community representative acknowledged Dublin City Council's interest in the establishment of a community information service – albeit for general community events as opposed to specific development or planning issues.

"On the one hand, I'd say 'Yes' that Dublin City Council are difficult and all the rest and I think I've explained why I think that. On the other hand, they are open to looking at other methods of trying to get that information communication to the local people." (Community Representative C)

Access to technical expertise

While there was ready agreement on educational barriers to engaging in the planning process, difficulty in accessing technical or professional expertise appears to have constituted a considerably more formidable barrier to community participation. Were the area not to have been characterised by low educational attainment, it would still have been without the financial means to procure the very specialised professional advice necessary.

"Education would be a huge difficulty... I'm not an architect, I'm not a planner and, for the ordinary person who has no background in that, it's very difficult to understand plans. I mean, that planning application has 145 drawings. You know, 145 drawings is huge! You'd spend three hours in the Civic Offices, trying to... go through three boxes. So I mean, there is implications around, you know, how planning permissions are set out and how they can be made more simplified for people to read. But I don't know whether that's going to be possible. Because I think part of a developer putting in an application is 'Make it as complicated as possible and they won't want to read it anyway after the first page because they can't understand it'. But, I do think that in some areas, there's better chances of people reading applications than in other areas because of the education..." (Councillor A)

In the first instance, the absence of technical expertise precluded community participation in the forward-planning stage. Unlike more affluent areas, inner-city communities were not equipped to assert or defend their community's interests during the draft stages of the City Development Plan.

"Well, the Corporation had information sessions about the Development Plan but sometimes, unless you are well versed - people in the more affluent areas of the city would have planners and architects on their committees and they would be able to make a better case. Even for the Development Plan, they look at it and, for their areas, are able to see what will help and what won't help. In areas like the Liberties and, not only the Liberties, but in other parts of the south-west inner city and all of the inner city, you might have other problems and you mightn't have time, you mightn't see a planning application up on the wall, you mightn't notice it. But even for the Development Plan, you mightn't know what to do. Now, the Corporation will give you time and planning meetings but you're still at a disadvantage. Now, Community Technical

Aid for the Dublin inner city, [named individual, Independent Community Planner] is involved in that, she does give a certain amount of support. But, I mean, it's not enough. There would want to be many more people involved, much more technical assistance." (Councillor B)

The need for technical assistance became particularly pronounced when inner-city communities were confronted by individual planning applications inimical to their interests.

"Yes, it is hard for community people. It's very difficult. Almost impossible now, for those reasons as well as the cost. And I'm sure [named individual, Community Representative] told you that, you know, the costs of going to An Bord Pleanála... And again you need also the expertise, in order to put in that submission or that appeal or whatever you want to call it. And local people don't have that. I don't have that, do you know. I'm a community development worker but I wouldn't have that technical experience." (Community Representative C)

Councillors espoused a similar difficulty in entering the planning arena.

"I think sometimes, as I said, unless you're an expert in planning and unless you have some kind of background with architecture or reading planning applications, it's sometimes very, very difficult. I mean, that's a huge application I showed you, that one. And I mean just the amount of work, just to sit down and, you know, say 'God almighty, there's 875 apartments in this plan'. You know, you have to cipher that out of all that that's on that page, you know that kind of thing. And I know now, Dublin City Council don't do that, the planners do that. It is difficult. I mean, I still find it very hard now to be honest with you. If you're writing an objection into some planning application, you kind of - it would be difficult for me to have the wording, unless I got help from an architect, you know that kind of a way, as to what I could appeal this application on..." (Councillor A)

The financial barrier

The resources required to engage in the planning process assumed two dimensions – the fees attached to the submission of each observation, objection and appeal and the technical knowledge necessary both to decipher the full import of planning applications and decisions and thereafter to formulate objections and appeals to planning applications and contested permissions.

If the dearth of financial resources did not constitute an unsurmountable barrier at planning observation and objection stage, it was acknowledged to pose a very considerable barrier at appeal stage.

"I think if people are interested enough, they can always spare €20. And I mean, if there's twenty people on a road, they can all put their name down on the one objection. And if you're interested enough and you think it's going to affect you, you've twenty houses at €1 a head, you know that kind of way. And you can have 150 people in on that...€20, it doesn't really matter. But it's after it goes from Dublin City Council, a problem occurs. You go to An Bord Pleanála, you're looking at over €200, you're looking at bringing in an architect, you're looking at bringing in a town planner." (Councillor A)

In an inner-city community that failed to accommodate the network of professionals found in other and more affluent areas, community representatives were obliged to engage in the appeals process without the range of experts commonly available to the development sector.

"This community has no finance to purchase the necessary expertise and no social networks from which it might be accessed." (Former Policy Analyst)

In some cases individual community representatives managed to read themselves into a very informed position on the planning system but still found themselves hopelessly disadvantaged vis-à-vis the private development sector.

"[Named Community Representative] has been to the forefront and he has developed expertise on it, you know. But, it's the battle of having the technical assistance and the

finance to be able to continue to appeal decisions - planning permissions given by Dublin Corporation. How to be able to continue to - for an average person to be able to do this - how to have expert technical assistance. So, it's very complicated for the communities now. Particularly in the past, it wasn't such a mad rush, the economy wasn't as great as it is today. And money is no object... The country is awash with money so they [private developers] can have all their experts and you haven't got one. You haven't got an expert opinion and although what you're saying might be true, unless it's put down in a technical form, it will be disallowed by the planning authority if you're appealing." (Councillor B)

Notwithstanding the obligation to forego such expert advice, the community had to grapple with the fees attaching to the submission of planning appeals. Individual community members incurred significant expenses in the process.

"If I say 'I' too many times, it's only because we've no money on the committee to pay for objections. I paid for the objections and it shouldn't be left to me to do that." (Former Community Representative A)

Other community representatives who hadn't engaged in the appeals process were also keenly aware of the inequitable position in which inner-city communities approached the planning system.

"...there's too much emphasis put onto an individual to actually challenge the applications. It's unfair money-wise. It's unfair in the sense that the facility isn't out there - well there is a facility out there but it's limited in the expertise that you can draw upon to actually mount these challenges." (Community Representative B)

Those councillors who found it within their means to engage professional expertise in the preparation of planning appeals also incurred significant personal expense.

"Like, I had... an architect's report done, you know what I mean. Now, that architect's report cost me €600... Now I mean, I know at the moment, for Kilmainham Mill, which is a site that's being developed down here. One of the only working mills left in Ireland and they're going to build 42 apartments. They're going to gut it. It's costing €4,500 for the residents. We went to An Bord Pleanála a few weeks ago, we had an oral hearing that went on for two days. And it's costing, to employ an architect, to provide a city planner, to get all the material together, it's going to cost another €4,500... The residents are paying... They had a quiz last night. A few weeks ago they had a draw, where they had tickets. They had a fund-raising dinner one night, a social thing. I don't know how much they've raised, so far. They're looking for donations from anybody who wants to give it. So, you know. I would have reckoned myself personally in the last five years, I was trying to reckon it up one evening here, I would have spent at least €2,500, objecting and... putting together things like that, you know so, just to send in." (Councillor A)

While local traders had been very alarmed by proposals contained in the draft urban design framework plan for the Meath St., Thomas St., Francis St. area, they had not yet been moved to engage their own technical expertise. They were, however, acutely aware of the vulnerability of community representatives in confronting the planning system.

"... that was a big issue and it was one we tried to address on the committee, I think it was in relation to the framework document. The architect on the committee..., he was representing the Institute of Architects - [Named Individual]... a sub-committee was set up to consider this, with myself, [named individual, Community Representative] and [named individual, architect & academic] was the chair of that. [Named individual, IAP Project Manager] was on it, I think there might have been some other participants as well. And [named individual, architect & academic] tried hard at that stage, to get funding for community groups to, like, that they would understand the jargon, that they could hire someone who could explain the jargon to them... We supported him on that. We felt too that that would have been a, you know, a good use of funds. The reply of the Corporation was that you had the use of the in-house planners, etc. But I suppose, like, with the best will in the world, you could argue that there would be a

certain conflict of interests there. So, yes there is. Participation in something like this requires access to professional advice in some areas." (Local Traders' Representative)

When approached formally on this issue in 2001, Dublin City Council's had refused to countenance the idea, describing any such funding arrangement as being akin to Dublin City Council's funding a community to 'keep tabs' on its activities. It remained constant on this issue as is evident in its rejoinder to those who continued to make the case for the financial assistance necessary to procure independent technical advice.

"Now, the issue of financing some independent people often becomes an issue. Like, if we engage consultants, for example, again going back to this plan and, like, the community didn't buy into it. They wanted us to pay for another consultant to go through the plan, if you like. And generally, we don't agree with that. We say when we engage a consultant, it's an independent view that we're getting, you know, and that, you know, that we're not in the business of, you know, generating another, kind of, consultant to examine someone else's work, that, you know. And the community would often look for us to fund things like that now and generally we don't. We say that it's an independent, it's for everybody and that it's a discussion document that can be amended." (DCC official)

The dearth of financial resources had weakened the community's position in objecting to and appealing contested planning applications and permissions. It also impeded its effort to pursue its case through the final official channel available to it, the European Commission. Having failed to secure an acknowledgement of its concerns from Dublin City Council, An Bord Pleanála or the Department of the Environment, community representatives sought to lodge a formal complaint with the European Commission, the body to whom the Irish government was obliged to maintain a reporting relationship in the implementation of the 1998 Urban Renewal Scheme (Department of Environment and Local Government, 1999).

"...we sought to lodge a formal complaint with the European Commission about the manner in which Dublin City Council was implementing the Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan. The European Commission responded to the effect that we would have to find a particular point on which it had legal competency. In conversation with a Commission official, it was suggested that we might consider pursuing a challenge to the validity of the tax incentive mechanism and the case which the Irish Government must have made for its use. We could have pursued that complaint through DG-Competition. Or we could have submitted a complaint to DG-Environment about the cumulatively negative effect that individual developments within the IAP were having on the environment. To have pursued either option would have required financial, legal and planning expertise which was quite simply beyond our financial and personal means at that time." (Former Policy Analyst)

The community group did nonetheless convey in writing its detailed objections to the Commission but had received no formal reply at the time when this research was undertaken.

The estrangement barrier: alienation, demoralisation and apathy

While apathy is often proffered as a barrier to the engagement of poor working-class communities in public affairs, a number of community representatives refused such explanations in favour of considerably more critical assessments of the non-participation of communities in processes which have a determining effect on their lives. For them, the non-participation of a significant proportion of the population was not explained by either communal listlessness or contentment with the status quo. Both explanations were refuted as being inherently conservative assessments of declining engagement in public processes. For such community representatives, it was a matter of alienation from the power structures underlying the very *status quo*.

"This area [the southwest inner-city] has the third-lowest level of political participation in Dublin. I would attribute non-engagement and abstentionism to alienation more than apathy.

People have no conception of the speed at which things are happening in the area or of the amounts of money at stake in these developments, revenues foregone or land sales. It's not apathy. It's a very vulnerable estranged community and it's subject to huge exploitation and manipulation. The charge of apathy might more fittingly be levelled at those politicians and public bodies who anticipate neither political threat nor political return from these communities and have consequently adopted a very complacent and disinterested attitude towards their views." (Former Policy Analyst).

The fragmentation of a once strong and confident working-class community was understood to have left demoralisation, pessimism and resignation (about the likely impact of engagement with the state) in its wake.

"You're born in an area where you don't expect an awful lot. So, if there's something done, you kind of say 'Ah, forget about it!', 'Live and let live!' and all of that kind of thing. There's an awful lot of that around here. And as well as that, it has to be said that the Celtic Tiger has risen a lot of the boats around here. There are people now that have cars and two cars or are doing extensions to their own house and they want to apply. They don't want people bothering them by objecting. There is still pockets of poverty around here. It's very hard to get very poor people to stand up against anything because they've lost, kind of, all hope or all whatever it is - heart. And there's other people who are getting on a bit and they're too busy with their own lives and they don't want to... You're up against an awful lot. Whereas years ago, this was a great area for volunteerism, there's no doubt about it. This was an area where we looked after ourselves, where we ran our own football teams. It might sound a very small thing but we didn't do it to keep kids out of trouble. We did it because we loved playing football but we were keeping kids out of trouble. We had our own boxing clubs that, again, kept kids out of trouble. We had our own youth clubs, run by people who were volunteers. All that is gone - not completely gone - but a lot of that is gone." (Former Community Representative A)

However, other community representatives did identify apathy as a major barrier to participation in planning. Such apathy was attributed to an inability to comprehend the full import and consequence of plans and proposed developments in the absence of those impacts being immediately visible. Engagement was seen as being more likely where the impact of a proposed development was immediate.

"...apathy, is probably the - would be my main concern. People just don't care until something happens. And the impact of what changes is going to take place is never fully explained. And it's - like, I always remember doing a tenants' participation course and people, when something is being presented to them as a development or a change, sometimes are more interested in 'Well, who's going to get rid of the rats?' rather than 'With this change, will there be enough places in the school? What amount of traffic will be on the road?' and other issues around like that, you know. They don't look at the environmental impact. What they look at more is the social impact sometimes and concentrate on that and they miss out then on the environmental impact, which are two different viewpoints. Social impact is, sort of, easier for the community to, sort of, target in on. The environmental impact then... the community doesn't be fully aware of and I think that has to be explained to them." (Community Representative B)

"I think that's one of the weaknesses in lots of cases, they don't look to the future. They don't say to themselves 'Well, what will happen in ten years' time?'" (Councillor B)

"I mean, even with the Traders Association, the... timeframe is so long. Like, in today's world, people expect instant results for something. So, if you tell them that there's - for instance, the Coombe by-pass down there. If you tell them that a road is going to be built but it won't be built for another five years, that's seems like eternity and they just, you know, they just switch off." (Local Traders' Representative)

"It depends on how much the issue impinges. If the issue impinges on people, they will come out, you know. If they don't see that it impinges on them - I mean sometimes, in terms of the

Luas, it was hard to see how it was going to look eventually. Although there was a good bit of - a good turnout for that too. It has to be something that touches them urgently, if you know what I mean." (Community Representative D)

If apathy was a contributing factor to the sense of helplessness which many felt in the face of a relentless development machine, some believed that such apathy was now giving way to anger.

"Well, I have to say now, there's a bit of movement starting up again with the women. There's been a lot of change in the Liberties area, in the sense that there's a lot of development. For years and years and years, nothing happened, there was derelict sites, it looked awful, people felt really depressed and it was just awful looking. And then suddenly, in the last three, four years, all this building has popped up, the new apartments, you know. You can't get into them, now. They're gate locked and you can't get in. You can't drop a notice to say that you're here, like, or anything. But, everything suddenly just sprouted up so it's kind of between - there's an improvement in what's been there but there's a serious lack of services and facilities because there's no land bank left in the Dublin City Council. And, I suppose, for few years there, three or four years, people were just on a treadmill and everything was happening, just go, go, go, you know. And you couldn't stop it, like. It was just going to happen, in that sense. But not a sense of apathy, if you understand what I mean. But now, people are getting more angry about developments that are taking place, that don't seem to take into account what people need in the area. Like the lack of facilities and services, like overshadowing of smaller houses - because the planners think it's ok to go up high and, you know, so forth." (Community Representative C)

Others refused to recognise apathy as a major problem and pointed to the emergence of a hard core of activists in every community. While they conceded that a single large-scale development might engender the greatest opposition they also pointed to growing intolerance of the amount of apartment development currently taking place.

"I think you'll get - In every area you'll get certain people that would be active in a lot of things. I think when something like Michael's Estate, or when something big comes up, there is a wider interest in it because people see it as, I suppose, an intrusion into their area. And because it's so big, I suppose, it affects them more than maybe if it was just a small little application. But because of the over-development - and this, I think, will continue - because of the over-development...people have really got their backs up." (Councillor A)

Obstacles

The informational, technical, resource and estrangement barriers impeding the entry of inner-city communities into the planning and urban renewal arena did not represent the totality of difficulties encountered by inner-city communities. The small number who managed to surmount these barriers confronted a whole new series of obstacles upon gaining entry to the state's planning arena.

Inadequate IAP structures

The first of those obstacles was located in the inadequacy of the structures established to oversee the implementation of the IAP. On its publication in 1998, the *Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan* proposed the establishment of a cross-sectoral Steering Committee within which community representatives would be invited to participate (Dublin Corporation, 1998: 125). The mechanism for effecting community participation subsequently established differed from the original 1998 proposals in one very significant respect - the substitution without explanation of a Monitoring Committee for the steering group originally proposed. While the latter would, by definition, have been mandated to adopt a directive, agenda-setting, decision-making role, a Monitoring Committee relegated its members to an after-the-fact monitoring role (Brudell, 2000: 24-5).

The significance of such a substitution was subsequently revealed as the power differential between the community representatives and local authority officials became increasingly marked.

"Before that, on other IAPs, they had Steering Groups. Now, people with more experience of community work than me on this Monitoring Committee, they were saying 'We want a Steering Committee. We don't want a Monitoring Committee'. I said the difference is so small that I didn't get too involved in the argument. That was the biggest mistake that I made, I didn't support them more vehemently in that. What we were there to do was, I thought we were there to make sure - if I'm reading the plan right - we were there to make sure that what was agreed in the plan was implemented. That's what I took from the IAP.

When we questioned that - like, all this is documented - when we questioned that, the final result - We wrote to the Minister. We wrote to the City Manager first and we got nowhere. We wrote to the Minister, we wrote to the European Commission. The last that we got back was that - from the Minister - that 'All decisions that are taken by the officials of the Monitoring Committee, they will be implemented'. This is when I resigned. What's decided by the officials, that's what counted, it's their views that counted. We were there to give a bit of advice and to have a look at things but we'd no powers. So, that's when I resigned off the Committee." (Former Community Representative A)

Other community representatives criticised the constraints within which the Monitoring Committee was obliged to operate, preferring a structure sufficiently flexible to allow for the convening of working groups and the importing of necessary expertise as specific issues and tasks arose.

"The point I'm trying to make here is that, if you are allowed some freedom to operate just slightly outside the system and have the authority to, sort of, bring in a working group with a specific role and purpose, it can work... benefits can come from this type of discussion and this type of group." (Community Representative B)

Misrepresentation of the standing of the Monitoring Committee

Despite repeated requests, Dublin City Council never furnished the members of the Monitoring Committee with terms of reference. Community representatives judged the continued failure of Dublin City Council to outline the role and function of the Monitoring Committee "to have disadvantaged the position of community representative – contributing to a continuing lack of clarification on the precise role of the Monitoring Committee and serving, in many cases, to preclude a complete engagement with the issues at stake in the implementation of the Integrated Area Plan" (Brudell, 2001: 17). Dublin City Council declined to indicate the function or authority of the Monitoring Committee – a failure which was to mire the forum in confusion and conflict.

"There's a few key things about the Monitoring Committee. One is: are we monitoring? We spent a lot of time as a group trying to get clarity from the Department of the Environment about what was our role and function because in the guidelines it was just guidelines. It wasn't 'This is what you have to do: X, Y and Z'. And as time went on, members of that Monitoring Committee, particularly community members, became disempowered because they felt that, no matter what they said, it didn't matter anyway, other people would go ahead and do their thing." (Community Representative C)

"I think in theory, it's [the Monitoring Committee] good. But, for it to develop and work in practice, its role has to be very, very clearly defined and its function. What power or lack of power it actually has, has to be accepted by all members of the committee when they're coming onto it. I think, that's my opinion, my viewpoint on it, looking at it from my angle of: if you believe you can change something, you'll continue to argue that point. But if you're aware that you can't change anything, you won't waste your time. And I think there was an awful lot of time wasted by the community because we didn't realise that we couldn't change. We kept arguing the point but just - and the frustration then kicked in, which is unfortunate. But, I don't think we're to blame for that. I think that that's the fault mostly of the process. Transparency,

openness and again being aware of the constraints that you're operating under." (Community Representative B)

The situation was exacerbated by repeated proclamation of the new era of participation and partnership manifest in the inclusion of the community within the formal implementation structures of the IAP. Judgement on the value of participation appears to have been dependent on the manner in which all such terms and structures were interpreted.

"There's a difficulty around the concept of participation and partnership. It depends on what you mean! And that's really where you run into trouble because these words are bandied around without a definition as to how far they go or where they go. Like, to me it was clear that, like, I saw the role as a representative. I was putting forward our point of view. If at the end of the day it wasn't accepted, there was nothing we could do about. All we could do, we could just argue our point of view. And I think that that really was the function of the Monitoring Committee." (Local Traders' Representative)

If, however, community representatives believed that they had been endowed with any real authority in relation to the manner in which the plan would be implemented, they were to be disappointed.

"But, at the same time, like, as I said earlier, you were in the context of a developing urban model. The area was being repopulated, it was going to change and is going to change and not everyone was going to be happy with the way that was going to happen. I'm sure [named individual, Community Representative] has gone on about it. One of the big issues was the heights of... the buildings on Cork Street. In the original plan, which he was sold and which he joined the committee on the basis of, I think they were meant to be, like - I think it was four stories was the maximum. That was changed and that effectively was going to change the amount of population you're going to have on Cork Street, the type of accommodation you're going to have and it was going to affect the locals. And he felt very strongly about that. I suppose I would have too, if I had been sold it on the basis - if you had joined it on the basis of one original thing and it had changed. I felt [named Former Community Representative] was a very effective representative of the local community. He really put across - and he felt passionately about putting across their point of view." (Local Traders' Representative)

However, passionate advocacy on the part of individual community representatives did not prove a match for a local authority which possessed all the legal power as it transpired that the community had not been endowed with even the very reduced monitoring role for which it had settled.

"Now, the IAP was sold to SWICN by the Corporation. And we thought that it would have more power than it eventually turned out to have. We were told that we would monitor. There was a Monitoring Committee set up, made up of councillors, architects, planners and community activists. And I was on it - not as a community activist - I was on it as an elected representative. But the community representatives didn't feel that it was what they thought it was going to be." (Councillor B)

Beyond misrepresenting the standing of the Monitoring Committee, Dublin City Council was also charged with misrepresenting the standing of the IAP itself – a factor which further impeded those community representatives seeking to ensure that designated sites would be developed in accordance with the design specifications which had been established. As development conditions became increasingly favourable for developers, Dublin City Council became correspondingly flexible about the standing of the design specifications which it had provided.

"There's also, you see, there was also the thing with the IAP, when that was set up initially, you were looking at redeveloping an area where it was envisaged that it was going to be difficult to redevelop. It was envisaged as a difficult area. The dynamic of the Celtic Tiger meant that city centre development became sexy and it started to attract developers. So, the context changed over the period and that, kind of, affected both the Corporation's and

Government's view of the way it was going to go. But, of course... the representatives of the local community obviously wanted to protect the interests of the local community, which is quite reasonable. So, I think there was a problem in that, to some degree, [named individual, Community Representative], would probably have felt and probably rightly, it was probably sold to him that way, that the original plan was set in stone. Whereas, from the Corporation's point of view, it was more permeable." (Local Traders' Representative)

The sense of betrayal among those community representatives who understood Dublin City Council to have made a contract with the community was palpable.

"Now, I've been conned in my life. I was a trade union official in the last ten years of my working life and I often made bad agreements. I hope not too often! But I did make bad agreements because I either wasn't, you know, intelligent enough, listening enough, cute enough, whatever. But, whatever agreement I ever made with an employer, I stood over it with my members come hell or high water, once I signed that in their name. And I will admit to them 'It wasn't the best. I could have done better but I didn't and I have to live with it and you have to live with it. I'll take my lumps and you'll have to take your lumps and that's the end of that'. Once you put your name on something, that's it! I thought I would be treated that way by City Council officials but I wasn't." (Former Community Representative A)

Having earlier rationalised the changing status of the Integrated Area Plan, Dublin City Council dismissed the idea that community representatives might have expected to have enjoyed actual power in the plan's implementation.

"No! I think they understand that they can make submissions but they're not always - you know, we can't always accommodate everything that they want." (DCC official)

The ends to which its consultative procedures were intended to function became clear in the Project Manager's subsequent description of his intervention in one development in which he anticipated opposition from community groups

"So, by having the meetings with the local clubs and the local community, I think we've - you know, everybody's happy. They're happy, the developer's happy, he sees where they're coming from, he sees where we're coming from and, you know, it's not going to be an issue now, as far as I can see. So, that's a type of example." (DCC official)

Unsurprisingly, the IAP became increasingly viewed by local community representatives as a facilitator for private-sector development. Consultation with local communities ensured that development proposals could be made acceptable to communities, any plans of embarking on the planning appeals route being averted.

"Yeah, exactly, exactly! And you can throw it around at meetings and get feedback and feed it back than and, like, usually some compromise can be reached. Whereas, if it was just lodged as a plan, you'd have hundreds of submissions on it under the planning process, like you know. And it would be lying there and objections to An Bord Pleanála probably, if it was pushed to the limit, you know. So, that's just an example of where we nip things in the bud. If we see something is going to be an issue, we have no problem with meeting with people." (DCC official)

Pressure exerted by private developers on third-party appellants

Those whose objections Dublin City Council did not succeed in forestalling took the An Bord Pleanála route and were confronted with all of the obstacles at the disposal of the private development sector.

"What happens to the individuals who do appeal? The approaches start - direct and indirect approaches from private developers, politicians and the community. They're very insidious. Approaches and pressure are probably even brought to bear from within organisations such as this [i.e. the community offices in which the interview took place]. If they don't move against you explicitly on this issue, they may on another. In offering money and buildings to

communities, private developers exert the most insidious pressure and that pressure can become unbearable. One developer, for example, was prepared to provide a communal office and a €2,000 payment to everyone living near one contested planning permission on condition that the community withdraw its appeal from An Bord Pleanála. If the offer is made to someone like [named Former Community Representative], who is nothing but integrity and who cannot be bought, it can also be seriously corrosive of community solidarity." (Former Policy Analyst)

This case study has already alluded to one development company's attempt to negotiate the withdrawal of a planning appeal using a publicly-owned building as leverage. This attempt to circumvent the planning appeals process was not unique.

"They weren't the only inducements that we got... If you were dishonest and sit down with the bit of knowledge I have now and I'm sure there's loads of people have far more than that, that you could sit down and you could write very good sound cases with one thing in mind. That they'll come to me when I go to An Bord Pleanála and they'll offer me something and I'll take it. It would be a nice little earner, I can tell you! On the [named] tax designated site, we were offered - not only me, the Committee - were offered €10,000 towards a minibus. The neighbours were offered €2,000 each, five or six of them. And we were offered, apart from the minibus, we were offered a custom-built small premises on the site, for the youth club. We turned all that down. A fella called [named individual] on the site down [named address], a site that he bought off the City Council, he asked me. He said 'Look, we won't be talking telephone numbers but, within reason, we'll be able to give you something towards your youth club or your residents' association, if you withdraw your objection'. He knew what was going to happen. He said 'All that's going to happen is I'm going to lose the top storey. I don't want to lose the top storey at An Bord Pleanála'. He must have known that An Bord Pleanála - he said 'If you withdraw, we'll give you €10,000 straight away and €20,000 when the building is finished'. That's thirty grand! We turned that down. The whole thing to me is just rotten. There's no doubt about it! It's all loaded against people. (Former Community Representative A)

Those appellants who came under political pressure to withdraw their appeals were to find the adoption of a principled stance to be both an anomaly and an impediment to engaging with the *realpolitik* of the planning process.

"Now, I've a mobile phone and if you asked me what the number is, I couldn't tell you! And I couldn't believe it! First of all, I was approached by a community activist and he said 'Look', he said, '[named former government Minister] wants to meet you. Will you give him a ring?' ... So, a few weeks went by and I got a phone call. I was at a meeting in Nicholas of Myra on Francis Street and I got a phone call on my mobile and it was [named former government Minister]. And he said - I couldn't believe what I was hearing - he said 'You objected to a planning application in Cork Street? By this time, I had objected to maybe three altogether. I said I had objected to a few. So, he named the site and I said 'Yeah, that's right'. So, he said 'Would you be prepared to meet the developers involved, to discuss the situation?' But what he didn't know was that, in the meantime, I'd had direct contact from [named developer] And [named developer] had asked me the same question: would I meet him. He was the developer, would I meet him? And I told [named developer] that I wouldn't be changing my mind, that my objections were based on a principle, not on something he could argue. He kept insisting would I meet him." (Former Community Representative A)

Most insidiously, perhaps, community representatives were to witness the mobilisation of local community pressure against them.

"There was pressure. Neighbours were got at and one of them was got at to such an extent that ... she wrote what can only be described as a scurrilous letter about me to my own Committee. Complaining about me interfering with her getting community gain directly off the developer. I still have copies of that letter. Other people came to me. In the [named development site], I had people coming to me from different places. [A neighbour] was approached by a community garda and told that only for me, that there would have been

community gain accruing on the [named development] site... So, there's a fair amount of, what would you call it, people they can call on and they can get to. I don't know, it's all something that you shouldn't be subjected to when all you're trying to do is the best you can." (Former Community Representative A).

Lack of accountability within the state's planning system

Notwithstanding Dublin City Council's dismissal of community protestations about contraventions of the Integrated Area Plan, individual community representatives continued to cite lack of accountability within the state's planning system as a serious obstacle to their participation in the planning system. That lack of accountability permeated through the local and national planning authorities.

"...the least that should be done is what's written down in the Development Plan, what's written down in the IAP, somebody when they're judging that case should take that and say 'That's in breach and I'm not going along with it'. And especially when an Inspector finds that it is in breach and says he's not going along with it. Four or five other people, or it can be as low as three other people, who I don't believe are planners or don't have to be planners, that they have the power to overturn that and that they in turn are government appointees. Now, I've heard it being preached everywhere, at the 'Four Cities' it was knocked into us, that we have the fairest system of objection and planning in Europe. That there's no other country in Europe where a Third Party can make an objection. They can put in observations but they can't make an objection. And we have that and we boast about that and we praise that and I believed again that that was a great thing. But I found out that there's a way around that, that the Bord itself, who are not elected, who are not experts, can overturn their own inspectors. The planning system to me is just a charade." (Former Community Representative A)

While the importance of the Third-Party appeal system was acknowledged as an important right for the citizenry, it was accompanied by a growing realisation that "the continuing and significantly more powerful right of the final arbiter in the Irish appeals system to make a decision without any accompanying obligation to outline its reasoning, significantly diminishes the right of the third party appeal" (Brudell, Hammond & Henry, 2004, 85). In an environment in which the executive board of An Bord Pleanála did not feel obliged to outline the rationale for its final decisions, questions were increasingly being asked about political orientations within the board.

"Yes, they seem to be following the view of the government on certain issues." (Councillor B)

One community representative returned again to the invidiousness of the position in which the local authority had placed the community by inviting it to monitor a plan and then goading it into adopting an oppositional and adversarial stance when it sought to act in accordance with the invitation issued. He was adamant that his criticisms were levelled at institutional planning practices and decision-making procedures as opposed to individual planners, his attention being focused on the local authority's corporate planning ethos and practice.

"And I know that there are very, very good people in planning who, given a chance, would do the best they could. And by the way, I'm not saying that all the things that I want are right, I'm not saying that for a minute. But what I am saying is this, I didn't make up that Integrated Area Plan, I didn't draw it together. They did it, the City Council did it. All I did was agree to try and implement it and because I've tried to implement that, I've been forced into a position where I had to resign off the Monitoring Committee. I never resigned off anything in my life. I had to! I couldn't go ahead with it. I've created enemies from the City Manager down to people that I didn't want to make enemies with necessarily. But, that's the way it has ended up, that I'm being treated as an enemy by people and I don't deserve to be treated as an enemy." (Former Community Representative A)

When all planning objection and appeal stages had been exhausted, those resident in the area were left to contend with the impact of each contested development on their neighbourhood and environment. If private developers appeared to enjoy *carte blanche* in

drawing up plans for individual tax designated sites, they appeared to enjoy a similar freedom in relation to conditions attaching to planning permissions. In seeking to ensure that developers adhered to those conditions at a minimum, the community encountered one further obstacle in engaging in the planning system – poor planning enforcement.

"And then, the other thing in planning, the enforcement, there's not enough working in that section. You would want to have no other work to do. There's a building development going on where [named individual, Community Representative] is. You would nearly want to spend your entire day on the site, looking at what's happening, getting in touch with the Corporation, getting them to enforce what's happening. There's not enough people to do it. So, that's a weakness as well in Dublin, planning enforcement." (Councillor B)

A political culture and power structure inimical to community participation

Looking beyond the particulars of the Irish planning system at local and central level, one community representative understood the community's difficulties to emanate from a larger political culture inimical to community participation. Real community participation was understood to be incompatible with the interests of the Irish state which instead contented itself with an abundance of rhetorical commitments and spurious participative structures without any corresponding devolution of power.

"Europe has a policy of active participation, which unfortunately what ends up in Ireland is that we take what's good and put it into the Irish context. And... what's been good in operation somewhere else loses its value, as we change it to suit ourselves. When you look at anything that's been operated in Britain or by any other European country, that is operating at a community level. When we change it to suit ourselves or what we see as our needs and this is at department level or government level, it devalues what that particular programme was about. Transparency, we can't deal with transparency. Our departments can't deal with transparency because it brings their roles into question... if you have a system that's operating in any other European country that breaks slightly alongside the bureaucratic system that's in place and is valued by the bureaucratic system, it works. But, when you bring that system to Ireland and in any way it challenges the bureaucratic system that's in place, it's just trampled on and it doesn't work. Bureaucracy will kill it, short-term and long-term!" (Community Representative B)

The community representatives' role in impeding participation

In the midst of many criticisms levelled at the local authority in general and planning authorities in particular for militating against the participation of officially designated community representatives in the planning system, community representatives did accept some responsibility in impeding the greater participation of their own community 'constituents' in turn.

Those who undertook to engage with the substantive issues at stake in the implementation of the Integrated Area Plan were obliged to grapple with increasingly complex and contentious issues and decisions. Each presentation of their case - whether to local authority, planning appeals board, area committee, central government, national parliament or European Commission - had to be underwritten by very carefully researched reports and position papers.

"I think the documents were good. But then again... we fell into the trap also in the production of these documents and we also then assumed that the community would be aware and be able to understand and read them, do you know? We didn't fully respect and appreciate where the community was either. As we were learning, it didn't necessarily mean that the community itself was being brought along at the same tempo. And I think we had a mechanism, we were lucky enough, where we could - SWICN as a community organisation - we could feed back what was happening on the IAP to them. They could ask us questions. But then we were relying on - because they're representing groups out there - we were relying on them to go out and feed back information to their groups, which didn't happen." (Community Representative B)

While community representatives endeavoured to inform their constituent communities of the critical issues at stake in the implementation of the Integrated Area Plan through existing community forums, Dublin City Council was in a position to circulate its own full colour newsletter to community groups in the area⁹ - a newsletter which did not relay any of the community representatives' concerns, conflicts or difficulties.

"...there's a two-monthly / three-monthly magazine that comes out. Again, that's all the good points that's happening in the IAP. It's published by the Dublin City Council. Anything that we say was objectionable, by the community, would not be part of that. (Community Representative B)

In an environment in which community representatives were not in a position to compete with either the personnel, technical expertise or public information budgets available to Dublin City Council, community representatives sought to marshal resources of a different kind through the convening of an inner-city wide forum of community representatives across each of the IAPs in the city centre. It hoped that such a forum would foster a critical and unified community presence in the implementation of the Integrated Area Plan (Brudell, 2000). While supported by the area-based partnership company in this endeavour, they encountered a certain reluctance among community representatives in other quadrants of the inner city.

"We tried to include - and because there's IAPs happening in other areas of the inner city, we tried to start up a forum in the Dublin Inner City Partnership, where the community reps on the IAP would meet to support one another. But it didn't happen. It wasn't as successful as we hoped to be... It got off [the ground] but we found that the representatives from the south-west were always there trying to get this motivated and moving and all. The other areas didn't necessarily participate, which was unfortunate." (Community Representative B)

The reluctance of community representatives in each of the other IAP areas to build a united front on community engagement with the IAPs was viewed by some as a lost opportunity for the wider community of the inner-city.

Outcomes, observations and conclusions

Outcomes for the community

Those who sought to ensure that the development of the Liberties would take place in accordance with the established design specifications watched as all such commitments were jettisoned to facilitate the wishes of the private development sector. If they were obliged to concede failure on the physical planning front, they were aware that physical planning was however only one aspect of an Integrated Area Plan whose stated objective was "to bring about sustainable urban regeneration by integrating physical, social and economic interventions to address the key issues in the area" (Dublin Corporation, 1998: i). IAPs had purported to "address not only issues of physical development but also cover wider issues of local socio-economic benefit, social housing, affordable housing and community projects including training and education" (Dublin Corporation, 1999b).

The Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan had been marketed to the community of the Liberties on three very specific socio-economic points - the attachment of a 'community gain' development levy of 15% of site value to key development sites; the provision for a 15% social/affordable housing obligation on certain sites (Dublin Corporation, 1998: iii); the securing of employment for local people through the imposition of a local labour clause. However, those who sought to salvage something from the plan's performance in relation its social and economic objectives did so in vain. The commitment to local labour was found to have been essentially meaningless.

"We were promised there would be local labour employed and then we were told, when we tried to enforce that, that local labour - because we're in the EU, that some child in Barcelona

⁹ Talking Liberties Coombe.

has as much right to a job in Dublin as a child in Dublin. We got six people, I think, employed locally on the construction in Cork Street." (Former Community Representative A)

The amount of finance realised in the community gain fund was also negligible.

"I resigned off the thing after three and a half years, off the IAP. At that time they had collected less than IR£4,000 in community gain. Now, that community gain has now gone up to... €458,000, in community gain has been collected, after four years, over four years. That amount of community gain would only buy two two-bedroom apartments in this area. So, that's the amount of community gain that has been accrued after four years, over four years." (Former Community Representative A)

"The only people who were party to the negotiation of the community gain levy were developers and Dublin City Council, so we know nothing of the content of those meetings or those negotiations. For over three years the community gain fund stood at just under €4,000. In the last year a figure somewhere between a quarter and a half a million Euro has been mentioned. That's a miniscule amount of money and a negligible return for the inner-city community in whose midst - and at whose cost - huge profits have been made." (Former Policy Analyst)

The community's representatives were also excluded from decisions about the expenditure of the community gain fund. They watched as proposals for its administration were subsumed within the local Area Committees, an appropriation which they labelled 'unjust' and 'political.'

"The suggestions, that we put in - recommendations as to how that [the community gain fund] should be dispersed, were totally disregarded... My viewpoint, although it differs slightly from the other community activists, was that it should be put in a sustainable community chest, for bursaries for second and third-level education, whatever it may be. So's that the chest would be always be there. You're looking at taking the interest, yearly interest, out. I think they reckoned it might be €3 million to €5 million when it finished, possibly €3 million. But where that interest from that would be continuously used around sustainable bursaries, around education for people in the area. And it would be distributed like a, do you know, a long-term type of bursary, whatever. Rather than being given €100,000 to some development or - that possibly Dublin City Council already have a responsibility to supply, a playground or whatever, you know...To me, that's a waste of money...

The community chest is now going to be administered by the Area Manager as such and it's going to be approved by Dublin City Council, the local Area Committee... We may make the application which, once we hear there's money out there to be applied for, even I'll apply for it, representing my group, if I thought it gets money down! But I do not feel that that's the proper system of how it should be distributed. Because the strong groups will get the priority and those possibly who most need it, won't. That's what my main concern is." (Community Representative B)

The commitment to social housing also contained in the IAP came to nothing (see Kelly & MacLaran, 2004) and while the government responded with Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, this did not prove any more successful in securing social housing. The subsequent amendment to that act in 2001 released developers from the obligation to provide land for social housing on site. In the case of the IAP, that social housing obligation was replaced by a modest 'monitoring donation.'

"We were promised social housing. Not one social house was built in this area in the four years of the IAP. They brought in Part V of the 2000 Planning Act and that was to enforce the provision of social housing onto developers and the developers refused to co-operate. There was a Mexican stand off that went on for the best part of a year, when they refused to develop at all, until this was withdrawn and changed ...in the Annual Report of the 2003 IAP, in the Annual Report on that, it has now been agreed, a figure has been put on the monitoring donation that you have to give in lieu of providing social housing.

So, instead of giving 20% - let's say you'd built 100 houses, you'd have to give (land for) twenty of those for social housing. That's what's intended in the 2000 Act. What that has gone down to now, you can give a 'monitoring donation' instead and they have quantified that as €4,400 for each apartment that is developed on the site. Instead of giving a site or instead of giving social housing you can give a monitoring donation of €4,400.

Now, to put that into context - if you build or if I build 100 apartments on a site, it means I have to give €440,000 and I'm free of the obligation to provide any social housing. If I build 100 apartments and I have to give €4,400 for each one, all I have to do is add on €5,000 onto the price of each one. The buyer won't notice €5,000." (Former Community Representative A)

While local councillors welcomed the development that had taken place on previously derelict sites, the accompanying costs were considered very high. Private capital's renewed interest in inner-city areas was understood to signal the demise of working-class communities as the gentrification of the area gathered momentum.

"There should be no derelict sites. I agree with that. But I also feel that the city should reflect - I don't like all that's happening in Dublin. I like - its better than it was ten years ago and it's better than it was twenty years ago, when there was no development. But, I think that the type of development that is taking place now is going to mean in the future that people like myself won't be able to afford, or younger people won't be able to afford, to live in the area. So, the planning is such now and the housing market is such that we'll be pushed out of the area and I think that's not good. I think the city will be Dublin but it won't have real Dubliners in it. It would be like no Cockneys in London, no Geordies in Newcastle. I think a city is not just a name, it's its people and buildings." (Councillor B)

Where previous community concerns might have focused on the dangers vested in such a derelict landscape, they were now obliged to confront their own future within that landscape.

"Well, the main future for the community here is being able to live in the area. The Corporation - the City Council are trying to get out of building houses, they're trying to do it through housing associations. The value of property is so great that a person like myself now - I mean, I live in the area - but a person like myself wouldn't be able to buy a house in the area. So, the main concern is that everyone will have to move out." (Councillor B)

While long-term residents of the Liberties did not romanticise the housing conditions in which that community had once lived, they were conscious of the many losses that would follow on the dismantling of that working class community and the social networks that had sustained it through adverse economic circumstances. In looking to the future of designated areas, they foresaw increasing social polarisation and a correspondingly bleak future for working class communities.

"...the bad thing about tenements were, they were unsanitary, there was overcrowding but one of the good things was the community spirit. Your granny would live down the street or your aunt would live somewhere else and there was always some support. Somebody would mind a child for you, whereas now you have to pay to have them minded. Whereas in the past, one of your relatives minded them for you. So, that's the main thing.

The other thing is that the gap between the rich and the poor is widening so it means - particularly in inner cities, the gap is widening between the lower paid and the professionals. The lack of awareness of people, working-class people, of the importance of education. If you're educated, it means - you're going to get something better, if you're educated than if you're not educated.

The importance of health, I think that's also important - I mentioned that earlier, that if you're not healthy you're not able to think. So, I would say things like that are important. If the Corporation sell off all their dwellings... it means there'll be no place for people to get accommodation, if all of the flats are sold off by the tenants. So, it's going to mean that a lot of people are going to be pushed out." (Councillor B)

They anticipated that their place would be taken by a transient population residing in atomised, segregated, private gated apartment complexes. Those community

representatives who undertook to monitor the type of developments taking place on tax-designated sites across the Liberties pointed to the deleterious effect of such developments on the social fabric of the area. If the local authority had admitted its culpability for the construction of "large modernist blocks [of social housing], in the 1950s and 1960s" and "the negative consequences in both human and urban terms" that followed from "the segregation of these flats and estates from their surrounding areas" (Dublin Corporation, 1998: 52), community representatives believed that it would once again stand indicted of bad planning on the basis of current planning permissions granted within the IAP.

"The vast majority of the apartments given permission are one-bedroom apartments. The next huge amount would be - not as big as the one-bed numbers but maybe half that for two-bedrooms and a very, very small number of three-bedroom apartments are going in any of these. So, from the Coombe to Dolphin's Barn, it's all on the one road, most of it's Cork Street, they have given or they will give planning permission for 1,000 apartments over it, maybe 1,100 apartments. It's a huge amount into the area. The apartments will be all gated and they'll be locked away from any intercourse or any kind of social interaction with the local people who are living there. There won't be very many children born in those apartments. And an awful lot of them will become transient camps for people who are getting onto the property ladder or for people who are developing...."

There has been a huge increase in the south-west inner city with the apartments. Yet, the schools numbers are falling because the only ones who go to the local schools are the children of the indigenous population. The rest are taken out to some other place to go to school. The people in the new apartment blocks, they don't even bother to register to vote in the area. They have no interaction with us, they don't shop locally, they don't support the area. So, what they're doing is just a recipe for further disaster in an area that has had disaster heaped up on disaster since I was a child and I have lived here all my life. Bad planning has created an awful lot of problems." (Former Community Representative A)

Outcomes for local traders

Concerns about future displacement were not exclusive to those resident in the area. While local traders offered a positive assessment of their involvement with the IAP, the outcomes cited pertained to the nature of the working relationships established as opposed to the hard quantifiable gains sought by some of the community representatives.

"Yes, it's been very good for the traders. I mean, apart from the...relationship we developed with the Corporation, we also developed a good relationship with the community groups...so we were able to explain our perspective to them and they were able to explain theirs. Because quite often, where you're not meeting with groups, people sort of envisage all sorts of sinister and mysterious plans where none exist at all! And it's always better if you can, kind of, get together in a situation like that. So, I think overall it's been a very good experience, yeah. But, as I say, within the limits." (Local Traders' Representative)

They offered a tentative welcome for the arrival of a new population in the area but were fearful that the local small-trader economy might be destroyed by encroaching 'Temple Bar type' development.

"I mean, people moving in has to be good. Like, one of the things, I mean, the street, particularly on weekends and Saturdays and that is very vibrant. You've a lot of people...in it. The...biggie, the big danger to this type of activity here would be, kind of, a spread of Temple Bar type activity, more super pubs...and, kind of, expensive restaurants." (Local Traders' Representative)

If the interests of those trading from their own premises were not immediately threatened by the redevelopment of the area, those trading from rented units were understood to be considerably more vulnerable to displacement.

"On Meath Street, they tend to own them [retail units] and on Thomas Street, they tend to rent them... we don't really tend to have much to do with Francis Street because it's a completely

different business and, like, what affects them isn't going to affect us. But historically, I mean, the reason why...the antiques developed on Francis Street was that it was completely run down and you could buy property for practically nothing on it and that's why it started as the antique centre. But, with the incentives, most of it now has been redeveloped with apartments overhead." (Local Traders' Representative)

Outcomes for the local state

Official assessments of the impact of the Integrated Area Plan did not dwell on negative outcomes for either the resident community or the local economy. The community's opposition to successive contraventions of the IAP along the route of the Cork St./Coombe Bypass was eclipsed by a palpable sense of excitement on Dublin City Council's part about the future complexion of the contested route.

"I think it'll be great when it's completed now. Like, there's a lot of development at the moment. But, you know, and the designs - We had a presentation last week of the different designs that are going into the buildings and, you know, it's good. It's good!" (DCC official)

Having earlier decried the community's opposition to building heights in excess of those provided for in the Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan as reflecting the 'NIMBY syndrome', the virtues of projects which would be located in the Liberties and become integral to the urban regeneration project.

"Most of the stuff that we have really isn't too objectionable; and we have, kind of, lovely projects like the Digital Hub there as well, which I didn't mention. You know, it's straddling a nine-acre site over here. And there's endless consultation with the community again... Whilst it's only a small area there it's, kind of, part and parcel of urban regeneration. You're getting digital industries and digital media industries in there, you're getting a whole new residential/commercial area. And again, it's under-utilised land that was formerly owned by Guinness most of it. So, it's part and parcel of the regeneration of the whole area. Things like that are fantastic for our area. The Government decided to put it into the Liberties area, you know, because it wasn't something that was part of the IAP." (DCC official)

Those who had opposed the nature of the developments taking place within the IAP on more serious grounds than 'the NIMBY syndrome' noted the growing momentum of a public discourse from which their criticisms and oppositions would be quietly effaced.

Observations on the legitimacy of the tax incentive mechanism

Information from the European Commission indicates that approval for the use of tax incentives within the 1998 Urban Renewal Scheme under the Commission's State Aid rules was granted on foot of representations from the Irish authorities that "it has not been possible in the past to develop these areas by the role of market forces alone. It is strongly believed by local and national economic actors that the fiscal relief provided by this scheme will offer the necessary incentive for companies to engage in activities benefiting regional development" (European Commission, DG Competition, 1999).

If economic conditions were indeed prohibiting development in inner-city areas by 'market forces alone' at the outset of the 1998 Urban Renewal Scheme, that situation certainly did not obtain beyond the early years of the IAPs. By late 2003, over 3,010 apartments had either been built or were under construction in the south-west inner city. Live planning permission existed for a further 1,150 units and permission had been applied for the development of an additional 1,158 (Kelly & MacLaran, 2004). Notwithstanding very favourable market conditions for private developers thereafter, the Irish authorities sought and were granted an extension to the Urban Renewal Scheme (European Commission, DG Competition, 2002).

Some community representatives refused to accept the validity of the state's rationale for the continued use of the tax incentive mechanism. They were critical of its use on a number of grounds; the freedom of developers to avail of tax incentives while breaching the design

specifications attaching to designated sites; the type of development fuelled by such incentives and the failure of the tax incentive mechanism to realise any significant finance for the community-gain fund. They were particularly critical of the regressive redistributive impact of the fiscal relief granted to private developers in circumstances in which the Irish construction industry was booming.

"...they're giving tax incentives in an area where you can get €5,000,000 for a relatively small site and they're competing with one another to buy the sites. And I'd question is it necessary now to give tax incentives to bring people in to develop? The City Council are selling off their own sites, the sites that they promised us in the same IAP that would be developed for social housing are now being sold off to these people. So, actually what they're doing is they're taking money from the poor and they're giving it to the rich. They're doing Robin Hood in reverse! And to me, we have been conned as a community." (Former Community Representative A)

The redistributive effects of the tax incentives and the continued validity of the rationale underlying their use does not, however, appear to have troubled Dublin City Council as is evident in its suggestion that tax incentives were in the interests of disadvantaged communities.

"In one way, I would think the disadvantaged communities get more attention than, we'll say, middle-class communities, you know. Like for example, the Tenters area here now, which would be regarded as a middle-class area, and you can see there's no tax designated sites in it. It's not regarded as the disadvantaged part of the area, if you like. We wouldn't have as much engagement with that community at all, as we would have with the communities in this area down here, the flat complexes and in what would be the socially-deprived areas. So, I suppose City Council focus more on the disadvantaged areas ourselves, with all our own resources, with the community people, you know, ourselves. They're the people that we're there for, including our area office. We would find that it'll be more of our own tenants and people like that, that would come in to us, rather than people who are from the greater Tenters area, where you don't have the social problems, maybe. So, I suppose it's all part of the process that we're there to serve the disadvantaged areas nearly more than [middle-class areas]..." (DCC official)

The role of elected representatives within the IAP

In an environment in which councillors frequently judged themselves to be at a disadvantage vis-à-vis local-authority officials and planning professionals, it is interesting to note that a similar dynamic was evident in the uneasy relationship between some elected and delegated community representatives. Community representatives observed a power differential in their dealings with elected representatives.

"...there's a philosophy out there that public representatives are the elected representatives of the community. Community, i.e. activists, do not in their view have the same type of power or wisdom or knowledge that they have, for some reason." (Community Representative B)

The decision to allocate the position of chairperson of the Monitoring Committee in accordance with the conventions of the party political system was understood as a clear signal to community representatives of the power differential between different members of the Monitoring Committee.

"I suggested the Chairperson, for my sorrows... I looked at the guidelines, I was adhering to the guidelines and I recommended that that person would be the Chair. We were told at the next meeting, that that decision would not be valid, that the Ceann Comhairle was the one who would be putting in the system. And the system that they were putting in, because of the council and the way the Council was balanced at that time, Labour / Fianna Fáil, that it would be on a rotation basis that the chair would be taking place - that the Committee itself had no function at all, over the election of the chair. So, I should have realised then that the restraints and so on and so forth were kicking in!" (Community Representative B)

Community representatives were critical of the party-political ends to which some elected councillors proceeded to appropriate the chairing of the Monitoring Committee.

"There was an issue where, around the chairing of the group, where it was done on rotational basis between the [named] party and [named party] ... when one [named] Chairperson was we'll say out of office as Chairperson, [named individual] didn't see it as appropriate to attend meetings. But, when [named individual's] year was coming back in as Chair, I objected and [named individual] wasn't allowed to Chair in that rotation. (Community Representative B)

The community's concerns were endorsed by a councillor who pointed to the property development interests which an elected representative brought to the Monitoring Committee table and a clear affinity between the councillor in question and Dublin City Council was also noted.

"[Named individual] would be taking the developers' side and all, and would own a lot of property in the locality... So if I was Chair of it, the community had their say but when I wasn't Chair of it, [named individual] was Chair of it and would do exactly as the Corporation would say. When [named individual] wasn't Chair of it, [named individual] wouldn't turn up for the meetings." (Councillor B)

Community representatives were also critical of the party-political ends to which they anticipated the administration of the community gain fund would be appropriated in time.

"Whatever political party is in power on the Area Committee, to me they'll have the strongest voice or the strongest whatever of how that funding is committed." (Community Representative B, 18)

Resources required to influence planning

In a working-class community which was not in a position to make financial contributions to any political party or policy making arena, people had recourse only to those institutions publicly available to all. The experience of those community representatives who engaged most closely in the public planning process led them to conclude that the significant planning decisions were being taken outside the public arena. They came to the conclusion that it was political influence and financial power that was determining the outcome of the planning process as opposed to the simple right to participate within that process.

"My experience in the whole lot has been that if you have enough money and enough pull - and I just want to make one thing quite clear, I don't believe that any money was given to Corporation officials. I don't believe that the thing of brown envelopes was continued in this instance. What I do think has happened is this, that a very right-wing government has decided that they'll give carte blanche to anybody who'll develop. And in all probability they are getting money and support from developers and people who represent developers and that their policy is being created to suit that kind of ethos." (Former Community Representative A)

Community representatives did not allege corruption in the traditional and legalistic sense of that term. They spoke instead of a disingenuous and duplicitous public process that purports to be the arena in which planning decisions are taken while simultaneously responding to powerful and influential external interests.

"And the planning process to date, from the experience I have mainly around [named community representative]'s...objections, would be that the planning system and objections within the planning system to me is corrupt. And I don't see any other word, where three people can sit down and over-rule an Inspector's report totally. To have not necessarily a background in planning. It's not a requirement, to sit on this group, that you actually have an involvement in planning or the planning process. And for an Inspector, who has the experience and has the ability to go out and see first-hand why these objections are there, do you know, why an individual is objecting or a group is objecting to these things, first-hand see

these and support the objections, can be over-ruled by three people, who are just looking at... a piece of paper. I think, that has to be some form of corruption. And that's not talking about brown letters or whatever, it's just lack of interest and understanding of the effect it's having on the community itself. That's my opinion of the whole planning process. Corruption, not brown paper corruption, a total inability to function." (Community Representative B)

Community representatives were not alone in discerning other planning criteria and other planning chambers beyond those in which they were invited to engage. Councillors observed the evolution of corporate decision-making processes within the local authority in which the decisions of executives were privileged over those of senior planners as planning became increasingly politicised.

"So, the planners hadn't got the same power. They would still make the decision and they're still professionals but they might be leaned on a little by other people in Dublin Corporation or they might be leaned on by the Department of the Environment to follow government policy." (Councillor B)

As individual community representatives became increasingly watchful in relation to planning issues across the wider city and country, they became aware that powerlessness in the face of the planning authorities was not confined to poor urban communities.

"The only last bastion of resort for those people to go to was An Bord Pleanála. And, they were a bit better off than me because there was ten or twelve of them, or fifteen of them in one instance, that threw in IR£3,000 each to fight the case. And in spite of that - they should never have been asked do that. You shouldn't have to spend money to try and get an independent board to do what an independent board should do. In spite of that, they lost the case." (Former Community Representative A)

Those who refused to acquiesce with the manner in which Dublin City Council was implementing the Integrated Area Plan were to find themselves increasingly marginalised. The fate of the community's Environment Working Group, which had proved a formidable force in monitoring and defending the community's interests in the plan's implementation, was offered as a case in point.

"For all of the years that I worked here, the Environment Working Group was charged with engaging with the IAP, with monitoring the implementation of the IAP and reporting back to the general body of the organisation. That arrangement ensured that SWICN remained fully apprised of all developments within the IAP and that its position vis-à-vis the implementation of the plan was informed by the facts of the situation. That situation obtained until such time as a decision was taken to resign from the Monitoring Committee of the IAP. In the weeks following SWICN's resignation, it was my feeling that Dublin City Council had taken a decision to bypass those who had been asking and demanding answers to the hard critical questions about the IAP to engage directly with other sections of the organisation that had never sought to engage with the very serious issues at stake in the plan's implementation and that were more likely to acquiesce uncritically with City Council's plans. We resigned from the IAP in December 2002. I have been told that the organisation has since been engaged in discussions with Dublin City Council about returning to the Monitoring Committee." (Former Policy Analyst)

The organisation in question subsequently resumed its seat at the Monitoring Committee table. Those who maintained their opposition to the manner in which Dublin City Council was implementing the IAP were left to ponder its reasons for seeking to engage the community in the implementation of a plan in which it seemed unable to acknowledge or concede the community's primary concerns. Some concluded that it was motivated only by a determination to preclude the emergence of any opposition to the local authority's plans.

"I asked an urban geography lecturer [named individual] afterwards – 'How do you explain Dublin City Council's behaviour? They invite you to go into their participation structures. Then

they treat your views and concerns with a total disregard and contempt to the extent that you are left with no option but to withdraw. Then after they've forced your withdrawal, they pursue you to return'.

And he said that it's because the city is both a national and an international product and the government wants to be able to sell the area as one harmonious whole in which all share in the same plan, the same idea - all pursue the same objectives. They want to be able to say that there's no dissent, there's no opposition to these plans. If Dublin City Council were to allow the community to remain outside of its structures – if they were to allow the community to arrive at an independent critical assessment and position on the IAPs, then the spectre of outright opposition and militant street protest presents itself. There was no way that Dublin City Council was ever going to risk any such eventuality." (Former Policy Analyst)

The impact of participation on communities

In the final analysis, the experience of engaging with the local state in the implementation of the Integrated Area Plan impacted differently on individual community representatives. In the absence of any demonstrable outcomes for the local area, one community representative expressed uncertainty about the case continued engagement with the IAP.

"I question being on it at all because I really, I haven't anything to show for being on it so far for this area, really." (Community Representative D)

Notwithstanding such uncertainty, the community representative's organisation in question remained at the Monitoring Committee table throughout, as did a second community representative whose position was informed by a pragmatic preference for working within the system

"Yes. I stayed on the committee because my personal opinion - well, part of the belief as well of the organisation - was that you can't - It's not always easy to influence from the outside, whereas you have a better chance or opportunity to influence from the inside. I made that quite clear with my other colleagues, that I decided that it would be much more appropriate for us, as an organisation, to stay there and at least have some kind of - at least we were getting the reports and the information and that information could then be spread locally." (Community Representative C)

A third community representative, who had had sufficiently serious grounds to tender his resignation from the Monitoring Committee in 2002, subsequently re-evaluated the relative merits of engaging with Dublin City Council in the implementation of the IAP, the relevant organisation resuming its place on the Monitoring Committee.

"We're already on it, back on it... One of the reasons around that, which I probably have to explain.. The IAP was built around Cork Street Bypass. If the bypass hadn't been happening, probably the IAP wouldn't have been in place. I think they'd have another type of regeneration programme in the area, not necessarily an IAP. The Hub is still there. The Digital Hub is still there and it's included within the IAP process. To date, the people operating in the Digital Hub have been very transparent and very open with the community.

I feel that, unless we're sitting around a table and unless we're negotiating, things will be happening that we don't know about until the last minute when it's too late to have any input or impact on any decision that's being made... I don't think if we're sitting around the table or we're not sitting around the table, in a developer's mind, that would be the least priority on his mind. But it would be the top priority on us as a community... unless you're sitting at the table, you'll only get the second-hand information.

I've learned a lot. I'll have a different approach from what I'd have on the IAP... I think, if you're looking at what is going to be developed and how it's going to be developed, unless you're sitting on the IAP, unless you have some mechanism of being part of the process, again things will be happening and you'll just know it happened too late. I've concerns myself going back in and I'm only temporary going back in to the IAP." (Community Representative B)

In outlining the expectations that the community should be entitled to entertain in respect of plans such as the IAP, it was clear that the community representative in question had accepted the broad parameters within which such plans were framed. The former trenchant criticisms on which he had tendered his resignation in 2002 had become transformed by the reality of the distribution of power on the Committee to a matter of counselling the state to incorporate checks and balances in the implementation of any future urban renewal project, the initiative and impetus lying with the private development sector.

"I think, if you're going down to spend so much money, so much time, doing these reports and having these hearings on such major developments, that the trust element of what is said at these hearings and what changes then occur by developers, there has to be some common ground. There has to be some mechanism put in place. One, for the community to understand why these changes - which shouldn't be always commercially driven. The benefits coming from some changes in a community's development should in some ways benefit the community. Not just total commercialism! I don't think, most of us aren't that naïve to think that - Unless the money's there, the development doesn't happen... And the funding isn't there, in the Government, the Department of the Environment or the City Council. So, it obviously has to be commercially driven.

But, I think there has to be some common ground, as to what way changes are negotiated, of what we feel is originally the plan... I think in the IAP, if that mechanism was to be repeated, that there has to be some mechanism built into it. That it isn't an individual or a group of individuals on the IAP who should be challenging actually these changes. There has to be some mechanism where the IAP itself as an advisory, monitoring group can challenge the changes. It shouldn't be just a talking shop or a debates, discussions system. And that's not to say that it has any legal powers, it's just that there's a mechanism built in, that it can challenge." (Community Representative B)

Radicalisation and changed views of the state

The fourth and final community representative occupied quite a distinct position from the other community representatives at the outset of the Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan. He reached radically different conclusions about the relative merits of engaging with Dublin City Council in the implementation of the Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan. As the community representative who had engaged in a major way through lodging third-party objections to the planning decisions being taken within the context of the Integrated Area Plan, he refused to allow Dublin City Council any further opportunity to cite his Association's presence around the Monitoring Committee table as "any evidence of community agreement with, or endorsement of, the manner in which it is implementing the Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan." He refused to allow Dublin City Council "any further opportunity to make the community complicit in the obfuscations, equivocations and evasions" in which the implementation plan had become enmeshed (Hammond, 2002). He stood unreservedly by his decision to resign from the Monitoring Committee of the IAP. His experience of engaging in the planning system resulted in a radically and profoundly altered view of the state and the ends to which the Irish government works.

"... my experience of the planning has been very, very disheartening and turned me into - When I was being reared, I believed that rightly or wrongly that we had the best political system in the world in this country. I took that as being the gospel truth that, for a country with a relatively short experience of independence, that we hadn't killed an awful lot of each other during the civil war, that we had quickly become civilized, that we had very high standards amongst our politicians. I always preached that to my own kids! That the Garda Síochána were beyond question, that the Catholic Church was beyond question, that everybody was doing as best they could in a country that was made up of decent people. Almost every one of them - I'm nearly seventy years of age - almost every one of those beliefs have been shook and I find it very difficult. I still believe that there are more good people than bad. But I have to say that this is the worst, most right-wing and uncaring government that I can remember in the State. And the civil servants or the public servants, who are responsible for the planning of the city, I have to say it, they have let this city down very badly and they're continuing to do it. And that the system can be bought. I'm not saying that on an individual basis. I wouldn't be

one bit afraid to say it if I could prove it or if I believed it. I don't believe it for a start and I could never prove it if I did believe it! But I believe that the Department of the Environment, the Department of Finance, the Department of An Taoiseach, they can be bought and influenced by people with plenty of money and that's what's happened. And they don't care that they ride roughshod over people. (Former Community Representative A)

The community representative in question described the profound political disillusionment that had followed on the betrayal of the community within the IAP. This disillusion was compounded by the toll which that engagement had taken on his personal health and standing in the community.

"That kind of finished off a chapter in my life, of being naïve and being gullible. It's still with me, I keep doing right whenever I possibly can. Then you get so your energy isn't the same and your health isn't the same and you're kind of isolated." (Former Community Representative A)

If he had reached an entirely altered understanding of the state and the ends to which it intervenes in the planning and urban renewal process, it did not lessen his resolve to defend his community's interests. If anything, his experience of engaging with the local state in the implementation of the IAP confirmed his refusal to concede the field to the 'unbridled capitalism' observed in the urban renewal project.

"I know profit has to be made but I don't think that capitalism should be unbridled, that it can do what it likes. And if there is profit made and if some of it is made at the expense of the people of this community, I think the people of the community should get something back. So, as long as I've breath, I'll always try wherever I can to do what I can. But, I know it's very limited. It gets less and less, what you can do." (Former Community Representative A)

For those who arrived at very critical conclusions about the real interests and agenda at stake in the implementation of this Integrated Area Plan, the unveiling of the state's role in facilitating the interests of the private development sector was perhaps the one positive outcome to be cited in respect of the community's extensive engagement with the IAP. As such, it allowed community representatives to take a fully informed decision about whether or not they wished to cooperate with the local and central state in the implementation of such a plan.

"In the past, community concerns often remained undocumented. It was only when we started to record what was happening within the IAP, when we began placing those concerns and those questions on the public record, when we began posing those questions publicly and pursuing responses doggedly that Dublin City Council began to take us seriously. If you keep putting those questions before them publicly, they're obliged do take you seriously... By pursuing them in the manner in which we did, we forced them to concede on the record and in print that the community's concerns and questions were of no import to their plans, that the community had no authority in the plan's implementation and that the opposition of the community posed no obstacles to its proceeding. Essentially that the only function that the community fulfilled within their Monitoring Committee was the provision of a semblance of democracy to the manner in which they were implementing the IAP. That admission introduced a welcome degree of honesty into proceedings and allowed communities to make a fully informed decision thereafter about whether or not their interests lay in continued participation within Dublin City Council's structures or opposition from without." (Former Policy Analyst)

For those who eschewed all arguments about the merits of remaining at the table irrespective of the business being transacted at that same table, the decision was absolute.

"When I, as an individual, undertook to represent my community – Cork St. & Maryland Residents Association – within the Monitoring Committee of the Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan, I did so in the understanding that the Plan would be implemented in accordance

with the commitments outlined in the plan as it was published in 1998. Little did I, or my community, realise that the IAP would be implemented in a manner which would attribute wholesale precedence to market interests over the legitimate social and economic rights of the resident community. Little did we realise that the extreme right-wing policies of the present Government would ensure that the maximum benefit of the urban renewal of a heretofore 'unfashionably' deprived area would accrue not to the deprived inhabitants of such areas but to the representatives of private capital who are moving in and reclaiming that land in their droves on the back of Government approved tax incentives. I am sorry to have to say that the last opportunity to do something helpful for the Liberties/Coombe area has been lost forever, in order to pander to the avarice of the private sector in the shape of developers. Perhaps if the community were in a financial position to make large donations to political parties, the outcome would have been different." (Hammond, 2002).

The experience of community participation and the assessment by community participants of the degree to which Dublin City Council had engaged in good faith in a process of full engagement with the community in the Liberties-Coombe Integrated Area Plan Monitoring Committee seem to make the earlier-quoted description of IAPs by the Council's Chief Planning Officer ring with a rather hollow sound:

"...a more holistic planning philosophy, with the social and economic agenda balancing the more traditional emphasis on environmental aspects. Emphasising consultation, the IAP can respond with focused strategies to address local issues on the ground". (Gleeson, 1999, 52)

5.5. BALLYBEG, WATERFORD

Context

Ballybeg is a large local-authority housing area located on the periphery of Waterford City. Comprising approximately 750 houses, Ballybeg was primarily constructed by Waterford City Council from the late 1970s onwards, for the purpose of housing people from the waiting list for social-rented housing. However, one estate within Ballybeg comprises private housing. In common with many large local-authority housing estates, such as Tallaght, few services or facilities were provided in conjunction with the new houses.

Easily accessible from Waterford City, Ballybeg is strategically located, close to the Waterford Institute of Technology, Waterford Crystal, the Waterford Regional Airport, the Cork Road and an IDA industrial estate (Waterford City Council, n.d., 5). However, the increasing residualisation of the area led to the designation of Ballybeg as a disadvantaged area under RAPID, characterised by socio-economic deprivation and spiralling drugs and anti-social behaviour issues. Although quite internally differentiated, parts of Ballybeg have become 'sink estates' or 'hard-to-let' areas. Waterford City Council sums up the problems facing Ballybeg as follows:

"Currently Ballybeg suffers from a poor image of a low skills base, and is generally perceived as having a community with a culture of dependency and high anti-social patterns. This is due partly to the fact that Ballybeg suffers from the problems of unstable tenancy patterns. A second important contributing factor is the physical layout of the area that creates large areas of indefensible space. On the positive side, areas of Ballybeg are settling well and give an optimistic example for the future." (Waterford City Council, n.d., 18)

Community Spirit and Voluntarism in Ballybeg

From its early days, Ballybeg has always had a strong tradition of voluntarism:

"Before that [the establishment of Ballybeg CDP], there was a lot of voluntary activity and there was a small grant for a women's group...Like I mean, there's voluntary activity in Ballybeg since 1975, when local women took over the builders' hut when the houses were built and set-up a little pre-school in it...So, since then like, local people have been organised because Ballybeg has a strong history of volunteerism." (Community Development Worker)

In 1991, Ballybeg Community Development Project (CDP) was established, under the Community Development Programme. The broad aims of the CDP were described as follows:

"I suppose really it was about supporting the local community to realise its full potential and development and all this kind of stuff. And to look at issues. And helping and supporting the local community to be part of the decision-making around their own area." (Community Development Worker)

An umbrella group called Ballybeg Action Group has also been formed. The Action Group is a broad-based and inclusive grass-roots initiative. All of the groups and organisations that are active in Ballybeg are entitled to representation, including sports clubs, residents' associations and a diverse range of specialised organisations:

"Each group in the area is entitled to have two reps on the Action Group. And most only send one because like pressure...and all the rest of it. Or they might alternate. But say like, we have groups like the residents' associations, there's two or three residents' associations on it. Then there's the sports groups, there's boxing, GAA, soccer, camogie and rugby. Now, there's one or two...soccer clubs and the rugby club were never - They're not like what we would call I suppose organic Ballybeg groups but they have fields in the area. And when the RAPID Programme started, we had to create an area committee for the RAPID. We didn't see...any sense in creating two committees, with the same type of membership and the same role, really. So, what we did was, we expanded the Action Group...Because there's a large...public land bank in the area and there are sporting fields here, they came in under the

RAPID for Ballybeg...So anyway, there's those. Then there's say the community development project, Barnardos, there's the Community Drugs Initiative, the BALL Project...The Community Drugs Initiative and the BALL Project [a youth diversion project] are both Lisduggan / Larchville area and Ballybeg...There's the Access IT, which is a social-economy, IT training project here. It used to be part of the CDP but it went in under the social economy programme, it became an independent business. There's the Dominican Fathers are involved, the Youth Project. There's an over-55s group but it's not very active but it still holds a membership of the thing...The Traveller Project as well actually. That's an important one." (Community Development Worker)

One of Ballybeg Action Group's key functions is to work with Waterford City Council with regard to addressing the issue of the lack of amenities, facilities and resources available within Ballybeg:

"...from the local community's point of view and the Action Group's point of view, we're coming from the position of a lack of amenities and a lack of resources and issues on the ground in the community. And anything then that we're approaching them [Waterford City Council, through the BACK Action Plan Sub-Committee] for support for - Say like, for example, we looked for support to build a post office in the area, there's no post office in the area. Or we're looking at, with the LEDC, the Action Group is supporting the development of the social economy enterprise centre and of the education centre and of our recreation centre." (Community Development Worker)

For instance, the refurbishment of Ardmore Park, one of the most run-down parts of Ballybeg, under the Remedial Works Scheme, was the Action Group's priority at the time of the interviews:

"Top on our agenda at the moment is the Ardmore Park refurbishment and they'll talk to you about that tonight I'd say. If not, you can ask them about it. Because there's serious issues and serious delays in dealing with boarded-up houses in the area...which leads to anti-social behaviour or whatever you want to call it. Unhealthy activity, I'd call it. Like with young people, drugs being taken in the boarded-up houses and under-age sex and drink. And the quality of life for the people in Ardmore Park and Ardmore Park Terrace is being severely affected by this kind of stuff. Also, rubbish dumping now, all this kind of stuff." (Community Development Worker)

The pre-existing network of active local groups and organisations afforded Waterford City Council the opportunity to harness local knowledge and enthusiasm in the regeneration of the estate. This opportunity was not seized until the inception of the BACK Plan.

The BACK Action Plan

Early moves to address the decline in Ballybeg focused on addressing the physical deterioration of the housing stock and public spaces, primarily through the Remedial Works Scheme and the development of infill housing. In 1998, the process of formulating an action plan for the Ballybeg area began, adopting a more integrated, holistic approach to urban regeneration. Estate officers were appointed to provide a one-stop-shop and liaise with tenants regarding maintenance issues. The process of formulating the BACK Action Plan began. This plan, covering the Ballybeg, Carriganard and Kilbarry areas, was funded under the DOEHLG's Housing Management Initiatives Scheme with matching funding from Waterford City Council. It lacked the statutory basis of Local Area Plans under the *Planning and Development Act, 2000*. However, Waterford City Council's development plan, which was adopted in 2002, adopted the vision of 'a city of neighbourhoods', with the intention that each development plan area will eventually have its own Local Area Plan (Waterford City Council official).

Key Elements

The area covered by the BACK Action Plan extends to approximately 360 acres, encompassing the established residential area of Ballybeg, in addition to an industrial estate

and substantial open lands to the south, currently used for agricultural and recreational purposes, including several sports pitches.

The BACK Action Plan includes broad objectives relating to a wide range of issues including Remedial Works to improve the existing residential areas, transportation infrastructure, green zones, education, community facilities, architecture and public art. However, three key elements underpin the plan. A neighbourhood centre will be developed in Ballybeg, with St. Saviour's Church as its focal point. It is envisaged that this mixed-use central area will contain a new commercial centre including shops, services including a doctors' surgery and incubation units, in addition to educational and community facilities, a variety of housing types and sizes and a major new regional park. The second key element of the BACK Action Plan is the development of new roads, linking the Neighbourhood Centre with the Kilbarry Road. This will enable the implementation of the third key element of the BACK Plan, opening up substantial lands to the south of the Neighbourhood Centre for residential development under the Serviced Land Initiative. The development of 1,350 new houses is envisaged, which will increase the total number of households in the Ballybeg area to approximately 2,000. This increase in population is justified on the grounds that 2,000 households are required in order to support a successful neighbourhood centre:

"There is 360 acres in the plan area of which approximately only 36% has been designated for housing. It is envisaged that 1350 houses would be built in a phased development over a number of years. Thus the total number of houses including existing Ballybeg houses would be in the region of 2000 which is the recommended number to support a Neighbourhood Centre." (Waterford City Council, n.d., 8)

Community Participation in the Formulation of the BACK Action Plan

The BACK Action Plan states that *"Consultation with the local community was pivotal to the development of this plan..."* (Waterford City Council, n.d., p.14). It was claimed that such fundamental importance was attached to community consultation, that the process of consultation took precedence over the product of the final action plan:

"The idea of process taking precedence over product is fundamental to the idea of sustainability. The process of public participation and interaction with the local community was an essential part of the generation of this plan from its initiation. To this end, Waterford Corporation set up a drop-in centre at Ballybeg and appointed Estates Officer [named individual] to work full time with the Community. He was instrumental in gathering ideas from the Community, listening to their concerns and in formulating this plan." (Waterford City Council, n.d., 14)

However, this statement seems somewhat incongruous. It is unlikely that the individuals and groups living and working in Ballybeg would agree with this privileging of process over product. The community's concerns doubtless lie with the shape of future development of their area, as dictated by the BACK Action Plan. If these concerns are not reflected in the final product of the plan, the process of consultation has clearly been meaningless.

The consultation process began in November 1999 with the extension of an invitation to participate to all local individuals, community groups and businesses. An 'overwhelming response' was reported, from both individuals and groups. The 35 issues raised by participants during this initial consultation are listed in the plan but there are no accompanying commitments with regard to their implementation.

The Draft BACK Action Plan was put on display in Ballybeg on 6th January 2000 and an information day for individuals and groups working in the area was held. This was followed by an information week for local residents, which was widely advertised through the circulation of leaflets to every household. An 'excellent turnout' to the information days was reported and *"There was a general consensus that there was something in the Draft Action Plan for nearly everybody"* (Waterford City Council, n.d., 14). Participants raised 33 issues in relation to the Draft BACK Action Plan at this stage, which are listed in the plan, together with Waterford City Council's responses with regard to the likelihood of their implementation.

The remainder of the consultation process primarily comprised the involvement of individuals and groups working in Ballybeg in refining the Draft BACK Action Plan. For instance, Ballybeg Action Group formed the BACK Plan Sub-Committee, on which the Action Group and Waterford City Council are equally represented:

"...we're working with the Council in the BACK Plan sub-committee, which is the sub-committee of the Action Group...And that's a committee that's half and half of officials from the Council and the Action Group." (Community Development Worker)

Ballybeg Action Group argued that the shape of the consultation process was largely determined by the pressure applied by the group:

"I suppose, the ten-year plan for the area, for Ballybeg, and the increase in housing and private development, there was consultation around that and there was consultation in different parts of Ballybeg. The Council actually came out, showed the plans and opened consultation. That was demanded by the Action Group here as the process. Because the normal process, as you know, is called consultation but really it's not consultation. It's not proper consultation. And that was a result of the Ballybeg Action Group making the demands. It's a huge development, a huge development. I think there was about five, if I'm wrong, four to five different meetings held...where you had the planning officers and you had three representatives from the Council and residents from the different areas coming together...Now, the result of that is probably another question that you have. But, that's the process that happened at the time..." (Ballybeg Action Group member)

Achievements

The commencement of the consultation process for the formulation of the BACK Action Plan in the late 1990s marked a fundamental shift in Waterford City Council's approach to the regeneration of disadvantaged urban areas. A more integrated, holistic approach to local area planning was adopted, while the potential role of communities in the formulation and implementation of plans for their areas was recognised. This gradual shift in the *modus operandi* of the City Council is continuing and a reasonably good working relationship seems to have developed between community representatives and the Planning Department.

Waterford City Council took a relatively simple but unusual step to address the barriers to community participation of low levels of educational attainment and professional jargon. In response to local demand arising during the formulation of the BACK Action Plan, a senior planner held a short course in Ballybeg in the evenings, covering the planning system and how to participate in decision-making:

"I have been out for successive Thursday nights, talking to people about how to get involved in the planning system - training. They asked 'How do you interact with the planning system?'...Requests arose from re-zoning land around Ballybeg for private development, which we hoped would create a critical mass to put in a neighbourhood centre. They didn't feel qualified to assess the plans. That's one part of the training." (Planner A)

This planner seemed to have developed a good relationship with the community and the course was mentioned positively by several respondents:

"I think it [education and literacy] may well be [a barrier to effective community participation]. Now for instance, I know there was a planning workshop here in Ballybeg, which was run by City Council for a residents' group out here and that's not so long ago. So, I can see if people really wanted to have that in some other areas or a further one here, I can't see there being a problem in that happening...I think workshops like that can be very useful in communities...So people could understand, people in the community can understand a little bit better then, the jargon and the different things involved." (Councillor B)

"...we invited one of the planners from City Council to come out to explain to us about the planning process, how to look at maps and all that kind of thing like. He duly came out...and he explained a lot to us...We're after learning a lot like and we've a lot more to be learned

and we need support around that and how to participate in the general process, for us on the committee [BACK Plan sub-committee] and for the general public as well...which is more important..." (Ballybeg Action Group member)

This course, held by a senior planning official at a time and place that were convenient to the community, demonstrated genuine commitment to facilitate meaningful community participation in the formulation of the BACK Action Plan. Despite Waterford City Council's gradually changing ethos, the Ballybeg community experienced several difficulties during the course of the participation process, hampering its ability to influence the decision-making process.

Missed Opportunities: Too Little, Too Late!

The imperatives of national policy and county-level strategic planning appear to take precedence over the meaningful participation of directly affected communities in the decision-making process. Local area planning, which is informed by extensive community participation, seems to merely 'tinker around the edges' of pre-determined strategies.

As a designated growth zone under the development plan, the decision to increase the population of Ballybeg to more than double its current size was non-negotiable, nor were the decisions to develop the neighbourhood centre and roads required to facilitate this expansion:

"The Ballybeg Area has been identified as one of the growth zones to be incorporated into the new development plan and also as a Neighbourhood Centre in the Strategic Framework Plan for Waterford and Environs. This area includes the existing Ballybeg estate as well as undeveloped land that will become available for development following the Serviced Land Initiative." (Waterford City Council, n.d.)

Within this context, frustration and anger on the part of the community was inevitable, when such fundamental decisions were presented as *fait accomplis* during the consultation process for the BACK Action Plan. A clear need exists for the pioneering of mechanisms designed to involve disadvantaged communities in strategic planning, which highlight the implications of strategic-level decisions for local areas. The statutory provisions relating to public consultation during the development plan review process are clearly insufficient to enable disadvantaged communities to engage in meaningful participation in decisions directly affecting their areas.

Lack of Openness, Transparency and Trust

Waterford City Council was not seen as an entirely honest 'partner' in the participation process. The local authority was starting from the compromised position of being landlord of a troubled estate. Its poor housing management record had been a major contributory factor in Ballybeg's physical and socio-economic decline. The City Council would have had to work hard to gain the trust of the community and persuade local residents that participation in this latest initiative would lead to change. To the contrary, negative perceptions of the local authority were reinforced at an early stage in the consultation process for the BACK Action Plan. At an initial consultation meeting held in a local school, Waterford City Council neglected to disclose that the regeneration of Ballybeg would also entail the rezoning of substantial adjoining lands for residential use. Local residents and groups were led to believe that the plan for the regeneration of the estate was a blank sheet, which led to anger and disillusionment when details of the rezoning emerged:

"...they put the white sheet of paper up on the blackboard. And then they said 'This is it, a plain sheet and there's nothing in this plan' and then they asked us to fill it in. In other words, like 'You have a say'. But, what they didn't put up on the white sheet of paper was the 1,500 houses that they - or the 1,250, it went down to 1,250 new houses - that they were bringing into the area. So, in a sense, we started-off on a bad footing from that..." (Community Development Worker)

The rationale underpinning the decision to rezone substantial lands just to the south of Ballybeg was that it would create the critical mass required to support a viable neighbourhood centre. Waterford City Council maintained that a population of about 2,000 households is necessary in order to sustain local shops and services in Ballybeg. The fact that the planned new developments would primarily comprise private housing was seen as a further benefit, maximising the potential spending power of the local population. The community did not agree. It was felt that existing services were over-stretched and could not cope with current demand. It was feared that an influx of new households would swamp local services, which were already struggling to cope. The emphasis on the provision of private housing was not universally welcomed, as it is generally inaccessible to the adult children of local residents. Some sections of the community expressed a preference for the provision of a substantial element of social and affordable housing:

“So, from there on in then it was...‘Right! There’s not enough facilities and amenities for the current community. Why are you building 1,250 more houses?’ And their answer to that was ‘You need the population mass, to bring in the facilities and amenities’. So, you need to have more population to bring in the doctor or to bring in the dentist or to bring in the post office or the Credit Union or more than one shop, which is all is here at the moment...The Council keep making the point that they’re all private houses, it’s going to make a difference. We would make the point that, first of all, there’s a need for more social housing in the area because children of families living in Ballybeg want to stay in Ballybeg...a high number of them...and not everyone has the money to take out a mortgage. So, there’s a need for more local authority housing, for more social housing, affordable housing and that.” (Community Development Worker)

“...if the population that was here at the start remained static, in terms of the houses that were built, it would be far easier to get in all of those facilities you’re asking for. The problems are, as the population booms here, in terms of the extra houses being built, it’s just it’s creaking at the seams. It’s unable to cope, in terms of giving the facilities to the people here in Ballybeg.” (Ballybeg Action Group member)

There was a widespread feeling that Waterford City Council is only interested in developing infill housing within Ballybeg and new housing estates on adjacent lands, without any real commitment to improving the infrastructure, amenities and services available within the area:

“How long ago since the houses were built in the first place and we had no facilities whatsoever? And it’s only as the years were going on that people started to form committees and trying to get something done that things started to happen. But, even now, we can’t get some of the facilities that we need because they’re only interested in putting in infill housing and putting houses here, putting houses there. And once they get that done, that’s it...I’d be concerned now that the Corporation can just go in, they build what they have to build, no infrastructure, no nothing and they’re out before you know it...There never seemed to be any constructive dialogue about infrastructure or anything like that. You only hear the odds and ends of it like ‘We’ve put money into this’ but we never see it.” (Ballybeg Action Group member)

Indeed, one local resident commented that Waterford City Council is continuing the long-standing local-authority practice of building housing estates rather than communities:

“...I suppose really the thing is they’re building housing estates, they’re not building communities. And that’s clearly the intention...forgetting that it has to be a community, that people are living in it. And even now, even now, even with the BACK Plan, that’s exactly what we were saying ‘We haven’t the facilities for the people and children that are living here. How on earth are we going to manage when all this new housing goes in?’...their whole intention was houses, houses, houses and it didn’t matter how they were going to get it as long as these houses were built. Bricks were put up and that was it. So, it’s not community building. That’s not what they’re about unfortunately. And none of the experience, as you say, from all of the other areas around the country has seemed to get through. Their whole objective is to build houses. That’s it!” (Ballybeg Action Group member)

Lack of Commitment to the Principles Underpinning Community Participation

A discrepancy clearly existed between Waterford City Council's conception of the meaning and scope of community participation and the Ballybeg community's understanding of the term. A widespread perception that Waterford City Council is not fully committed to encouraging and facilitating participation of a type that the community considers meaningful was evident from the discussion group with Ballybeg Action Group. While a superficial impression of community participation in the formulation of the BACK Action Plan was created, there appeared to be a lack of meaningful input into decision-making. It was argued that the City Council was inflexible regarding many key decisions and most of the many suggestions put forward by the community were ignored:

“Speaking for myself, I’m not aware of any encouragement by the City Council. I suppose we could say when they started what we call the BACK Plan, which is the Ballybeg, Carriganard, Kilbarry Plan, they gave us a blank sheet but then they told us what to put on it! [Laughter] I think that’s the only way we could describe it. They did give us a blank sheet but they filled in the blanks themselves...We had loads of suggestions. Hadn’t we, at that time? Absolutely every type of suggestion and we were ignored. A lot of our suggestions were just thrown away. But, I suppose they took onboard a couple of them but that was about it...It would only be those little carrots thrown at us now and again, to get us to agree.” (Ballybeg Action Group member)

With regard to participation in the development control process, it was argued that individuals from disadvantaged areas trying to make observations get a cold reception due to the overly legalistic emphasis of most planning processes:

“...what amazed me was if you write in, questioning it or opposing something, you get a standard letter back, it costs you money to get the letter back and it tells you you’ll be informed or something. Very brief, very, very vague altogether...I’m not aware of this process at all. I was amazed now. I was amazed! I really have to say I was, that that is the process. That an ordinary individual, living on a housing estate, would have to go through that. It’s not user-friendly by any means...” (Ballybeg Action Group member)

Nevertheless, there was broad agreement that the culture of Waterford City Council was changing, albeit slowly:

*“I suppose, in comparison to twenty or twenty-five year ago], though they have come on in leaps and bounds...’
‘Oh they have, yeah, yeah. They have tried anyway. They’ve tried their best I suppose to talk to us. It’s very hard. People say that I’m on City Council’s side but it has been very hard on them to talk to us because up to a couple of years ago, they just didn’t talk to you. That was it...”* (Ballybeg Action Group members)

“...even in the Larchville / Lisduggan area, there was widespread consultation and presenting that back to people as well...And it’s been seen as a good PR exercise, you know. I’d be a bit cynical - is that all it is? However, they do respond and...I have seen more of the Council officials and people now than I have done...in the past three years than I would have in about twenty-five.” (Ballybeg Action Group member)

A community development worker felt that much depends on individual officials' attitudes towards community participation. While some officials show a genuine commitment to the principles underpinning participation, others are simply going through the motions in order to comply with official policy:

“I do and I don’t [think that Waterford City Council is trying to encourage community participation], to be honest with you. I think there’s certain people within City Council see it as the way to go. I think then, there is another thinking within City Council that says ‘We’re being dragged in kicking and screaming into it because we’re told we have to do it’, alright. So, there’s two kind of approaches. One would value that community participation and see that

it's a right thing to do and the other then would kind of be... 'Here we go! Don't forget now, we have to consult'. Do you know this kind of thinking?...I think some of it is down to personalities. As a culture within the organisation, like they wouldn't be as far down the road as someone like the Department of Social and Family Affairs...The culture of the organisation...I don't think they have totally bought into this thing of local people need to be consulted on their own area...I think they're getting there and they're moving towards [it]...' (Community Development Worker)

Privileging of Expert Knowledge at the Expense of Local Knowledge

Waterford City Council's decision-making processes appeared to privilege the expert knowledge available in-house and from its consultants, including professional engineers, architects, planners and housing officials. Although the value of the unique local knowledge and first-hand experience available within the community was recognised on paper, it did not seem to be accorded equal status in practice. This privileging of expert knowledge at the expense of local knowledge is evident from the fact that Waterford City Council was not open to negotiation with regard to key, pre-determined elements of the Draft BACK Action Plan, when local residents and groups raised fundamental concerns during the consultation process. Some examples of key issues raised and the accompanying official responses published in the BACK Action Plan, are as follows:

"1. There should not be too much housing included in the Action Plan.

Response: *In order to attract a viable commercial centre into the area, some housing will need to be included. In total there will be approximately 1350 dwellings included as part of the Action Plan, this is only 36% of the overall land available. The construction of the dwellings will take place on a phased basis".*

"2. Most of the housing included in the Action Plan should be either private or affordable housing.

Response: *The creation of the best possible social mix will dictate the type of housing to be included in the Action Plan".*

"4. The number of roads included in the Action Plan needs to be examined, i.e. there are too many.

Response: *The number of roads included is in keeping with the level of access required to service a well planned area".*

Some of these official responses to the issues raised by the community during the consultation process could be construed as patronising to the individuals and groups who had taken the trouble to participate. Taking advantage of its claim to superior technical knowledge, Waterford City Council presented several key issues as non-negotiable for technical reasons. The City Council's failure to properly explain the logic underpinning such pre-determined decisions prevented the community from evaluating their validity. For instance, the BACK Action Plan states that 2,000 households is the 'recommended number' to support a neighbourhood centre, without explaining by whom it is recommended or on what grounds. Planning is not an exact science. The examination of alternative scenarios is a common tool of analysis, which was not employed in the case of the BACK Action Plan.

There does not appear to be any good rationale for the apparent exclusion of the community from decision-making with regard to important issues such as what constitutes a desirable tenure mix, which will largely determine the social mix. Indeed, it could be argued that the community's first-hand experience renders it better qualified than the local authority to make many such judgements.

Other official responses published in the BACK Action Plan attempted to deflect responsibility toward other agencies or developers.

"17. The need for a roundabout at the Cork Road / Ballybeg Drive junction.

Response: *This junction is on a National Primary route. Therefore such a decision is a matter for the National Roads Authority and this will be kept under review".*

"6. If a new pub is built it should be located as far away from the community facility as possible.

Response: *This is a matter for the commercial market".*

Waterford City Council does not have the power to implement all of the community's requests. However, its failure to pledge its support or make any commitment with regard to progressing community requests stands in marked contrast to the modern emphasis on holistic social, economic and physical planning, inter-agency co-operation and entrepreneurial co-operation with developers that underpins local area planning. Waterford City Council's efforts to deflect responsibility toward other agencies or developers suggests a reluctance to engage with the community with regard to certain issues. This lack of engagement regarding issues of concern to the community suggests a lack of genuine respect for local knowledge and commitment to meaningful participation.

Evidence from the BACK Action Plan that Waterford City Council places a higher value on expert knowledge than local knowledge was corroborated by the interviewees and discussion group participants. There was general agreement within Ballybeg Action Group that the City Council did not take any of the issues and concerns raised during the consultation process for the BACK Action Plan onboard in the formulation of the final plan:

"...I'd be open to correction on it but the general feeling has been, since that [BACK Action Plan] consultation process took place, none of those issues have been taken onboard, even in relation to the social / affordable housing issue. To my knowledge!...That's just from my participation in the Action Group and that." (Ballybeg Action Group member)

For instance, Ballybeg Action Group found it impossible to influence the consultant landscape architect's vision for the new open space. This was despite the local community's long experience of unattractive, under-utilised open spaces in the area, which have tended to attract dumping, vandalism and anti-social behaviour:

"...another major issue for me...is around the park and discussions and the concentration. Like, when [named architect] and the Planning Department came out here...we made certain suggestions and they were completely ignored. They were looked at through [named architect]'s eyes, as a planner and an architect...He didn't take into account the views of the community...And you find that a lot with architects and planners...They just look at it from their point of view, as an architect or a planner. You know what I mean?..."

- 'We were going to have a free-flowing park...And, I mean, I can still see the hand going down. We have a free flowing park!'

- 'We have!' [Laughter]

- 'In actual fact, it was pointed out at some of the meetings with [named individual] and what have you, that it wasn't going to work out and that's what we told them'.

- 'But, he was actually told it wouldn't work'.

- 'He came out didn't he? He came out and he walked around the park with us and looked at these big hills. And we were saying 'Look, they're really too big [named architect]. What are they supposed to be for?...'

- 'See, [named architect] had a vision, his vision for this park you see and that's all that mattered. And in the meantime, [same named architect] was taken out of the position. We're stuck with that for twelve months or more and the reason given is the architect is gone to Wexford. We're still stuck with it up there...'

- 'The rolling hills!'

- 'I can still see his hand, telling us about this'"

(Ballybeg Action Group member)

One resident argued strongly for a statutory requirement for local authorities and their consultants to take the views of local people into account in local area planning:

“- ‘Can I just say something in relation to...that point. Surely to God it only is common sense that for any architects, whoever they are, in drawing up a plan for an area, they should take into account the views of the local people. The views of the local people should be paramount, with all due respects to engineering...and all the rest of it.’

- ‘They’ll tell you that!’

- ‘They should be! It isn’t the question they might be or they could be, they should be. Do you know what I mean? After all, the architects who are working on designs of one thing or another in Ballybeg are not living here, right. They can live some place else. They don’t have to live with the consequences of their planning, good, bad or indifferent. But, they should take into account the views of the local people. That shouldn’t be a request or a prayer being offered up to the man above but it should be. It should be part and parcel of any planning policies.’

- ‘Well, they [Waterford City Council] would tell you that. They would tell you that.’

- ‘That’s not good enough. That should be in writing’

(Ballybeg Action Group member).

Tellingly, one councillor praised the City Council's efforts to bring the community onboard with their plans. This suggests a patronising attempt to ‘educate’ communities and a continuing failure to recognise that plans may have to change if participation is to be meaningful:

“I think they really did their very best to try and facilitate and to try and bring almost, you know, as many people as they could onboard with their ideas and that.” (Councillor B, Ballybeg)

A community development worker argued that Waterford City Council's attitude and practices are slowly changing, However, substantial variation remains between different officials and departments within the City Council, while the type of issue can also have an important bearing on the outcome:

“I suppose I see that changing a bit now, I have to say...In the past, they wouldn’t have [taken the community’s views and concerns seriously] but maybe things are changing a bit, slowly but surely...Sometimes [it depends on the officer]. Sometimes it depends on the Department. Sometimes it depends on the issue.

“...we would approach them with a proactive, developmental approach to planning. And there’s been pluses and minuses in that whole process. Like, in some ways...it’s been easy. In other ways, you’re struggling to get the Council to actually see your point of view...So...we’ve had different experiences of it. And then personalities would have different ways of dealing with people and that can affect how meetings go and the outcome obviously...And some meetings can, to be honest with you, can turn out very, what would you say, very negative and very adversarial, is that the word I’m looking for, or whatever. Whereas other meetings then...things can work well and you feel you’ve made some gain and you feel that you’re forging, kind of, building trust and positive relationships. And then suddenly, it’s like one step forward and two back sometimes, you know. And it’s very frustrating...” (Community Development Worker)

Waterford City Council's privileging of expert knowledge over local knowledge has engendered a perception within the community that participation is futile. For instance, repetition elsewhere of the same mistakes that were made in Ballybeg, such as designing estate layouts that are conducive to anti-social behaviour, was cited as an example of the City Council's failure to listen to the community:

*“...one of the main issues for me as well like is about design and what have you...With all the furore about anti-social behaviour and what have you, the City Council are still building estates which are conducive to anti-social behaviour in their design and everything and they still haven’t changed their attitude on it. All the modern ones, look at any of them, every one of them, the way they’re designed are conducive to anti-social behaviour. **And you’re only hopping your head off the wall.**”* (Ballybeg Action Group member)

Thus, although Waterford City Council is becoming increasingly community friendly, its practices with regard to community participation do not yet seem to live up to its rhetoric.

Following Funding Streams and A Lack of Holistic Planning

A widespread feeling existed that Waterford City Council often fails to consult properly with the community, due to a tendency to allow the available funding streams to dictate priorities. Citing recent examples of playgrounds and urban forestry, it was argued that the City Council hastily puts together applications to draw down funding under various programmes for specific purposes. Working to tight deadlines imposed by external agencies, such as the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, makes meaningful consultation with the community regarding the content of these proposals difficult. Furthermore, it was argued that integrated, holistic planning is unlikely to emerge from a plethora of such single-issue applications. The actions implemented tend to be the actions for which funding is available, rather than those prioritised by the community:

“...a classic example of it was the money that came on-stream for playgrounds...we would say that like ‘Yes, go for funding’, if that’s what suits us. But, if it means that we have to actually...react the whole time and sort of tailor the needs to meet the funding stream, rather than ‘Look, these are our needs. Let’s find a way of funding this. But, be very clear on the plan first’. So, what we’ve done is, we’ve said ‘No, we’re not going to jump and shove up a playground that could end up being vandalised or could end up having to be taken down again’. What we want to do is put the time and energy into getting a really good play policy and plan together by consultation and then, step-by-step, look at implementing that plan. But...we’ll have a lot of work done beforehand, which will include bringing in and involving people that may be inclined to anti-social behaviour in the area maybe. So, we’ll work with people so that there’s a sense of ownership around whatever the development is. And who knows like, by doing it this way, we can come up with a much more interesting development, much more holistic, one that...could be completely different to just lobbing up a few swings...I think it looks like we’ve managed successfully to pull it back a bit, to do that preparation work and planning and developing our policies before we just jump and say ‘Yeah, there’s so many thousands available to put up swings and stuff. Let’s go and get it’...” (Community Development Worker)

With regard to the formulation of a childcare and play policy, Ballybeg Action Group eventually managed to secure the agreement of Waterford City Council and RAPID to formulate a detailed policy, rather than simply drawing down funding to build playgrounds:

“Now, since then, we’ve actually managed to come up with an agreed way of looking at it, of working with it. It seems now, after a long struggle with the Council...We wrote to the RAPID and asked RAPID for their support, to come up with a sustainable answer to the childcare / play needs in the area. So, they’ve come back and said ‘Yes, we will help you. Let’s sit down together and do this’. So, that’s the approach we wanted in the first place. It’s a pity that it had taken so long” (Community Development Worker).

Indeed, Ballybeg Action Group decided that they would like to adopt their own comprehensive ten-year plan for Ballybeg. This approach would have the advantage that the community’s position in relation to a broad range of issues will have been debated fully and agreed in advance of any specific proposals. This would negate the need to constantly keep pace with proposals from the City Council regarding applications under various different funding streams:

“It’s like what we were talking about...last week, in relation to the Action Group having their own ten-year plan for the area. Their vision for the area and looking at what play policy they’d like to see in the area and looking at taking some of that initiative in saying what they want. Rather than just responding to what City Council or these private developers are coming in and then it’s a rear-guard thing, you’re always trying to fight. And...before you know where you are, you’d have ten years down the line and where’s your greens gone, where’s your playgrounds gone, where’s your open spaces gone, you’re going to be surrounded. So, I think

that's the community planning kind of thing. So, one of the suggestions was looking at areas and learning from places that have done it. And one of them was mentioned in the Dublin area that have done it and decided on their plan and got support from the Council and that, to do their plan. Rather than something being imposed on you..." (Ballybeg Action Group member)

It was felt that Waterford City Council is beginning to recognise the problems posed by its traditional methods of working, with regard to community participation:

"...the RAPID co-ordinator and the Community and Enterprise have highlighted that there are funding streams available and are looking to support the community to actually draw down these funding streams. Sometimes there's, as I was saying to you, there's a difference of opinion as to how that might happen and which comes first, the chicken or the egg, the funding or the plan? Do you know? So! But, generally speaking...like, the Council...kind of wants to support the community, I would feel anyway. It's just sometimes they don't - They go about it in a different way to us. And what we'd be saying is 'Listen to the community'. Like, local people are the experts. And local leaders and activists in the Action Group have a wealth of local knowledge. They know what'll work and what won't work. And they're open to changing their minds. But, like that you just don't kind of job in things, without working with people. Do you know?" (Community Development Worker)

Timeframe

One of the ways in which the local authority's ideal of community participation appeared to differ from that of the community was Waterford City Council's perceived preference for a representative model, consulting primarily with Ballybeg Action Group, which was seen as representative because it is an umbrella group. However, the Ballybeg Action Group favoured a deliberative model of community participation, whereby individual residents and local groups, of which the Action Group is only one, are drawn into in a broad-based participation process. This approach is more likely to encourage widespread dissemination of information and stimulate debate. Reflecting this preference, Ballybeg Action Group insisted on its own members reverting to the groups they represent, prior to reaching a position on any major issue, on the basis of which feedback is given to the City Council.

"...sometimes, they [Waterford City Council] think they're doing it but what they call consultation and what we call consultation might be different. Like, say for example, I think sometimes with the Action Group, we would be very clear the Action Group represents the Action Group. The Action Group doesn't represent the whole community of Ballybeg. Sometimes, there's the feeling that the Council just want to have to deal with the Action Group, not go further than that...In these kind of situations, our role would be to make sure that proper consultation takes place." (Community Development Worker)

While this model of participation ensured that the Action Group continued to properly represent its constituent groups, it is by its nature very time-consuming. Indeed, some community groups meet only once per month, making it difficult to react to a proposal within less than about six weeks. This was frustrating for the City Council, particularly in the context of the frequently tight deadlines set by external agencies for various funding applications. This issue of timescale presented a similar barrier to meaningful community participation in development control decisions. Meeting perhaps only once per month, many groups reported difficulties in formulating observations regarding planning applications within the area, during the relatively short period within which the public may make submissions:

"...we would spread out the plans on the floor and have a look at them and see what we think. And members would bring it back to their own groups as well. The problem there is that usually it's only a five weeks thing and...groups may be meeting once a month. So, a lot of the time you find you're reacting to things that the timescale is tight on and that can be a difficulty." (Community Development Worker)

Access to information

Community representatives seemed to enjoy a relatively cordial relationship with officials and no problems were reported with regard to accessing specific information from Waterford City Council, once they were aware that a plan or proposal for the area had been put forward. However, the statutory mechanisms for advertising the display of draft plans and individual planning applications in the newspaper are clearly inadequate in the case of Ballybeg. It was argued that local residents and groups do not have the resources to comb the newspapers for such advertisements. The key roles played by Ballybeg Action Group and a local community development worker in disseminating information about the BACK Action Plan were highlighted:

“Yeah [well-informed] but if the Action Group wasn’t there and it was for the local community to actually get the information! Like...if I wasn’t like given the role in my job or if a number of community activists weren’t on the ball around what was happening around planning, what would happen then?...things would be passed or otherwise, without anyone having a real opportunity to comment or...to be consulted...” (Community Development Worker)

Despite their efforts, the community remained largely reliant on Waterford City Council to disseminate information on plans and proposals affecting the area. The City Council had certainly put considerable effort into the effective dissemination of information regarding aspects of the BACK Plan. A locally-based Estate Officer provided a contact point and source of information for residents, while leaflets were circulated to each household and local meetings held at critical points in the formulation of the plan. An innovative Planning for Real exercise was also held:

“They came out and they had a thing in the school, one of these model things. So, they did that...They did up a model and brought it out to the school and people, they wrote down their comments and stuff like that. You could put in a slip of paper with your comment on it.” (Community Development Worker)

It was felt that Waterford City Council is gradually improving its approach to the dissemination of information. Ballybeg Action Group was specifically invited to participate in the review of the BACK Action Plan:

“There’s a review of the BACK Plan coming up now and we had a letter from Community and Enterprise, flagging that fact that it’s coming up and looking at engaging the Action Group and the community in that review. So, that’s a positive thing that they’ve actually, before the thing even started, that they’re quite conscious - Now, we’ve been asking questions about it as well so I suppose we reminded them of the fact that we were here and not to forget us in this review. But, we did get a letter from Community and Enterprise Director, telling us about the review and flagging that it was coming up and that they hoped we would be involved in it. So, that’s good.” (Community Development Worker)

Nevertheless, the dissemination of information seems patchy and often left to chance, as illustrated by this comment on the BACK Action Plan:

“Usually, the onus is on the community groups to find out about stuff, if they don’t come and particularly flag stuff up with us in the first place...Issues and developments, ideas or fait accomplis are brought to the BACK Plan sub-committee table, if you like. So, ‘We’re doing such a thing’...or whatever. And sometimes they’ll say ‘Look! There’s this opportunity. What do you think?’ It’s a bit of both, really.” (Community Development Worker)

Lack of awareness often leads to missed opportunities to have an input to the decision-making process, particularly with regard to planning applications:

“...what happens is...a huge development being proposed, commercial developments, and no-one seemed to have taken any notice. The closing dates for objections or whatever we’ll say was on the following Monday week. And only for it came up at a community group and

residents came to a meeting and the plans were brought in front of people! They hadn't an idea of what was being prepared and what was being planned. And there was a handful of objections went in, as response to that. However, lucky enough, that...developer has been asked by City Council for further information, it has been delayed. But, that's the process and that's what happens. People are not aware.” (Ballybeg Action Group member)

“...the big problem is, in nine out of ten cases is, they don't know until it's just too late...you don't know where you stand until it's too late...” (Ballybeg Action Group member)

Education and Jargon

Members of the Ballybeg Action Group had accumulated considerable experience of participation in planning. However, it was felt that the planning process was very difficult for a lay-person to understand. For instance, it was argued that the potential impacts of proposed developments on an area can often be difficult to decipher from planning applications.

“Well, I know from my own point of view, most certainly, that planning is one of the difficult areas to get your head around...I suppose, the reading of plans itself, I don't know, I mean, I find it difficult. I'm sure a lot of people do, you know, if you're trying to - You know, I suppose, planners themselves and architects, you know, they draw them! They know what the end product is going to look like...” (Councillor A)

Gaining an understanding of a planning application or plan is only the first barrier to effective community participation. Comments and objections from the community must be deemed valid planning issues and couched in technocratic terms, in order to be taken seriously:

“The biggest problem I find out on the ground is when people are objecting, they don't know what grounds to object on...As long as people are in this group [Ballybeg Action Group] or whatever, then we'd have a fair idea. In general, when people are objecting...they think that they can put anything in it like...” (Ballybeg Action Group member)

Resources

Fees: A €20 fee applies for lodging a submission commenting on an individual planning application. As Ballybeg Action Group had not made many submissions of this type, raising these fees had not yet presented an obstacle to the group. However, a community development worker felt that even this low fee would pose a barrier to people from a disadvantaged area like Ballybeg who wished to object on an individual basis:

“The CDP have covered like €20 or whatever it was a couple of times. Do you know that kind of thing? We haven't lodged an awful lot of objections. I think there's only been one in the past year anyway or the past two years. So, there haven't been huge fees...But, say if the individual member groups wanted to do it or individuals, local people, we would see that as a barrier for local people...” (Community Development Worker)

A Councillor concurred with this viewpoint, arguing that 20 represents a substantial deduction from an unemployed person's budget:

“...only recently I'm aware of a particular case, where somebody, you know, €20 was a problem to them, you know. And, I suppose, those of us that are working might say, you know, '€20 isn't a problem'. But, if you're not working and you want to make a case regarding planning, it can be a problem, I'm sure...there wouldn't be too many because €20 isn't, I suppose, isn't a whole lot, relative to your income” (Councillor A)

It was argued that lodging an appeal with An Bord Pleanála against a decision of Waterford City Council in relation to a particular planning application posed a much more serious barrier to effective community participation in the planning system. The substantial financial outlay required and the daunting perception of the institution contributed to the creation of this barrier:

"Yeah, absolutely [resources to appeal a planning decision do pose a barrier to community participation]...I had issue to send a planning application to An Bord Pleanála myself...I'm not sure, is the fee something like €100 or €120, is it?...But, it's up at that kind of money and it can be prohibitive, most certainly, for people, particularly individuals. Say, communities could come together but again, if you're an individual, to kind of come up with that kind of money...But, I do know too that the whole Bord Pleanála too, does put people off. You know, they feel it's up there, you know, it's up there in Dublin and it's away from them...it's kind of an ivory tower thing. And, you know, they feel that 'Ah sure! Look, there's no point in going to An Bord Pleanála'...But, we've had a couple of cases in Waterford recently, where people successfully went to Bord Pleanála." (Councillor A)

Indeed, the only way in which Ballybeg Action Group could mount an appeal was by joining forces with other community groups, in order to defray the costs:

"...the only way we did get about that expense...was that four or five groups came together. That was the only way we could do it like. That had an interest in it." (Councillor A)

Technical advice: Developers clearly enjoy an advantage in negotiating the planning system, in terms of the range and quality of technical expertise and advice on which they can draw, as highlighted by both councillors interviewed:

"I think what we have seen is we have seen developers use the system very effectively...I don't believe they're doing anything that they're not entitled to do...They're using the system...All developers would have planners as part of their team and they would know the whole planning regulations inside out. And they use that then, if you like, to try and stay one step ahead of communities. Communities mightn't have the professional planning advice onboard...at that early stage and...they tend to be playing catch-up...We're talking, I suppose, of major developments and they tend to be playing catch-up on it. But, I think communities are beginning to inform themselves more...because it's necessary...They're beginning to, yeah, inform themselves of the planning laws...As I said, the planning laws are a bloody minefield." (Councillor A)

"...there is a feeling I pick up anyway, out there amongst the community and as an elected representative...that they...have the professional advice onboard, they have accountants, they have planners, everyone to advise them on how to get these developments up and up quickly, through the planning process quickly." (Councillor A)

Indeed, developers' design teams may include professional planners, architects, landscape architects, engineers, traffic consultants, archaeologists, ecologists, daylight and sunlight specialists and so on.

In contrast to the teams of consultants advising developers, Ballybeg Action Group relied on the part-time assistance of a community development worker employed by Ballybeg Community development Project (CDP). Although she was able to devote quite a lot of time to providing administrative support to Ballybeg Action Group, she highlighted the lack of resources available to fund staff as a source of missed opportunities to participate in the planning system:

"...our [the CDP's] role in the Action Group is: first of all, as a member of the Action Group and secondly, as admin support, we would help. Like, I would do minutes and things like that. I'm not the worker for the Action Group but it feels like that sometimes. Because there's days I would spend, weeks I would spend - Like this week, I think I spent nearly two days working on it and I work four-and-a-half days a week. Like, I would have spent a fair bit of time. And because the CDP management and the co-ordinator feel that it's really important work, then we do. That's why we do it. But, we're not really adequately resourced for that kind of work. The Action Group actually needs a worker because there is so much going on. And to be on the ball and to be proactive and not all the time just reacting to things, we need a full-time worker...Because planning is so important. And to be able to maximise all the opportunities that are coming up...under the City Development Plan, under the neighbourhood plan for the

area. To be able to actually maximise those opportunities, we need resources and that's a barrier as well. That's a big barrier. We don't have the resources...I know the agencies will say 'Well staff, we can't fund staff, we can't fund staff'. Staff is what gets the work done!...Volunteers are what they say they are. They're volunteers. They're not paid workers with responsibility. So, people volunteer at the pace and the time that they can give. And it's very unfair then to be expecting volunteers to be able to be, what would you say, kind of participating fully in all of this, if they're not resourced to do so. And part of the resources should be staff to help them, staff that are accountable to them. And the CDP fills some of that need but nothing like what it could, if it had the resources. And there are missed opportunities..." (Community Development Worker)

Members of the Ballybeg Action Group highlighted the support of the CDP staff as vital in enabling the group to participate meaningfully in the planning system:

"...to be honest about it, from my experience here anyway...only for the support of the CDP,...in all aspects of the activity within the Action Group, we wouldn't be able to exist in any...effective way...And...the CDP worker here, there's only a small piece of work she can do because like the CDP hasn't got the resources either...They're working on a string as well...in every area..." (Ballybeg Action Group member)

In addition to drawing on the Planning Department of Waterford City Council, Ballybeg Action Group had enlisted the help of a local architect and a member of Earthwatch, to provide technical expertise on planning-related issues free-of-charge:

"On a voluntary basis, we have made links with a local architect and with J_ [City Planner], who is very good and amenable and if it's at all possible to help us out, he will. A member of Earthwatch...has made himself available to read maps and stuff for us. So, we've made those kind of links. But, they're links we've made." (Community Development Worker)

The inclusion of an official from Waterford City Council among the list of sources of technical expertise available to Ballybeg Action Group is a tribute to the good relations that have evolved between the community and the planning department, which largely seemed due to the efforts of one senior planner.

In the context of Ballybeg Action Group's lack of resources to pay professional consultants, meaningful participation in the planning system would be problematic without these informal sources of technical expertise:

"First of all, it would cost us. I mean, we don't have the money. The Action Group has a grant of €1,100 for training for itself. It doesn't get money for on-going, this kind of stuff. So, you know, a couple of hundred Euros won't get you far in paying for an architect to come in to meetings...So, we are dependent on that kind of thing [voluntary help]." (Community Development Worker)

Nevertheless, a need for independent professional advice when dealing with the City Council was identified by Ballybeg Action Group:

*"- '...sometimes, the community, we can be wrong...for our own lack of information...And sometimes you'd nearly want -'
- 'Your own planner next to you.'
- 'Or an independent person in the middle, to give you guidance or even prompt the questions that you might ask' [General agreement]...Do you know that kind of thing? And I was just looking back [regarding the landscaping of a park] and I said 'Oh God, we're going through all this now and we really don't have the information'. Because they're not voluntarily going to give you the information as such [General agreement]...Although, they've been very nice. They were very good..."*
(Ballybeg Action Group members).

The lack of funding available to facilitate and resource community groups was identified as a major barrier to meaningful participation in the planning system:

“...there’s always an issue of finances because, I mean, the Action Group is supported by the CDP, they have very limited resources. The support worker is not a support worker to the Action Group, she’s only there to do a small piece of work. So, there’s a huge issue of resources to support community through all of that process.’

- ‘Not even planning. I think through any process within City Council, we actually do need the resources to do it...’

- ‘Well, a perfect example of that is the Tenant Support Worker. That’s gone...which was badly needed to help communities to get involved and what have you...Not one! You’d want three or four of them but they took away the one we had’” (Ballybeg Action Group member).

“- ‘...even around the play policy, looking for a small amount of money to develop a play policy, our plan, and trying to bargain. They [Waterford City Council] wanted to identify the possible area before they’d give the money. It was only around €1,400, you know what I mean? So, you’re having to all the time be looking for bits and bits and bits and pieces.’

- ‘And you’re begging most of the time.’

- ‘Absolutely!’”

(Ballybeg Action Group members).

Ironically, the lack resources available to community groups, preventing the hiring of professional consultants, could sometimes lead to unnecessary expense, as a result of a lack of experience:

“...we appealed something to An Bord Pleanála there, a good few years ago. We hired the wrong bloody solicitor. She cost us €1,400!...And it was the residents of Lower Ballybeg paid it. Well, I didn’t pay her. At the end of the day, she never finished the job so she only got €900 off us and we didn’t pay her the balance. We told her we would when she’d give us the final thing, which she never did. But, we discovered after, if we’d gone to someone else, it would have cost about €150. [Laughter] We were going mad! And we’d done a load of the work ourselves. A load of the work we done ourselves.” (Ballybeg Action Group member).

Apathy and alienation

Despite Ballybeg’s strong tradition of voluntarism and plethora of active community and sporting organisations, it was argued that apathy acts as a barrier to community participation, particularly on the part of individual residents as opposed to groups. A wide range of difficulties face many of the families living in disadvantaged areas, reducing the time and energy available to devote to planning issues:

‘There’s a huge, vast majority of the people here are so concerned with their other issues and there is a lot of apathy. And there’s a lot of issues, there’s disadvantage issues, health issues, depression issues, all of that combines to the general apathy in the area. They don’t see things. They see people going to meetings after meetings after meetings and all of that and talking. Then they say their piece, they see nothing happening about it, they see their area, more houses being boarded up or whatever, they don’t see anything happening so they think it’s futile even putting their voice forward, if they have put their voice forward in the first place...And they don’t seem that they have control over what’s happening in their area...’ (Ballybeg Action Group member).

Alienation from the local authority as a result of negative experiences of other State agencies acted as another powerful deterrent to engaging with the local authority, for many individuals:

‘...we done a survey for the education project as well...A lot of families here in Ballybeg have had bad experiences with most of the statutory agencies and to get them involved in such as an Action Group or what have you, they think it is a waste of time...Like you take issues with certain families around unemployment, that go from generation to generation, issues around education and that’s the one that we done the survey on. It was very noticeable that families that had problems with the education system in the past, the same thing...followed through. And the same applied with other agencies as well...And that’s one of the major issues that we’re going to have to try and combat in the future, to get people involved...Because that

thing about apathy, hopelessness, due to their experience in the past. And as far as unemployment and that like, in two or three houses that I went to, it came from family, family, family..." (Ballybeg Action Group member).

Alienation from the State had engendered feelings of powerlessness within disadvantaged areas, creating a sense of hopelessness and leading to a lack of civic engagement:

'...there's definitely an element of powerlessness or citizenship, understanding the process of citizenship or that we have a right to determine where we live and how we're living. I have to say, there's a general trend towards taking more power, you know, and centralising it and people don't take power back. Even in relation to the voting in the Ballybeg area, is it 16% of the voters, the eligible voters, vote in the area? There's a general lack of citizenship, general lack of participation" (Ballybeg Action Group member).

This alienation from the State and consequent lack of faith in their participation making any meaningful difference to outcomes represented a considerable barrier for Waterford City Council to overcome.

5.6. TALLAGHT INTEGRATED AREA PLAN

Context

Tallaght is a sprawling low-density suburb on the south-western periphery of Dublin (see MacLaran & Punch, 2003). In the late-1960s, Tallaght was conceived as a relatively self-sufficient new town. However, both private investment in retail and leisure facilities and public investment in infrastructure and services failed to follow the development of large-scale housing estates as expected. The outcome was the creation of extensive housing areas, with poor access to shops, services, public transport and employment and a poor quality physical environment. South Dublin County Council describes the development of Tallaght as follows:

“Tallaght grew rapidly from a rural village to an urban centre over a period of twenty years, on foot of its designation as a New Town in 1972. The New Town concept proposed low-density residential development with neighbourhood centres to provide for local need.

Tallaght was planned as a self-contained New Town with its own town centre and hierarchy of centres serving planned neighbourhoods within the town. The neighbourhood concept involved the arrangement of approx. 1200 dwellings in a unit served by a primary school, local shopping and open spaces. Sites were provided for churches and community facilities, and two neighbourhoods would share a post-primary school.

The rapid population growth experienced in West Tallaght in the 1970s and 80s was due primarily to the high level of the local authority’s house-building programmes. Invariably, there was a time-lag between the residential settlement of the area and the provision of a range of facilities that would be expected in a settlement of this size. Great efforts have been made to address the backlog. However, inadequacies still exist” (South Dublin County Council, 2003, p.6).

The serious under-provision of infrastructure and services in Tallaght had many adverse impacts on the quality of life of the residents of the new town of Tallaght:

“...you know the disaster of Tallaght anyway, from its inception. The planning was so bad that they just built houses, houses, houses, no infrastructure...I came to live in Tallaght in 1974 and it was ten years before The Square was built so...we had absolutely nothing. We had to walk to the village for everything, from out in the suburbs...They just built so many local authority houses and just dropped the people into them...I had to bring my pram down to the village, there was no shop...for a quarter of an hour. I’m originally from Terenure and I’d be left. I’d go down to visit my mother and I’d be waiting for the 65 and it would just pass by from town full so I’d have to go back home and wait for another hour and come back out for another because it was only once an hour, was the bus. And I’d have the buggy. I only had one child at the time. But, you’d just be left at the bus stop” (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee member B).

A high proportion of the housing constructed in Tallaght is socially rented, provided by the local authorities for the purpose of letting to persons on the social housing waiting list. The serious gaps in the provision of services and infrastructure in Tallaght contributed to the rapid residualisation of many local-authority housing estates in West Tallaght and consequent social problems.

A major improvement in Tallaght’s amenities came about in the 1990s, with the opening of the Square Shopping Centre and the establishment of several important institutional uses in Tallaght Town Centre, including the Institute of Technology Tallaght, Tallaght Hospital and the designation of Tallaght as County Town on the establishment of South Dublin County Council. Tallaght is now designated a Major Town Centre under the current Development Plan, catering for the retail and service needs of a regional catchment area. Aside from improved access to a range of new shops and services, the benefits of these developments have largely been confined to Tallaght Town Centre and its immediate environs. Parts of Tallaght, particularly the extensive local-authority housing areas in West Tallaght, remain

untouched, with high concentrations of disadvantage. Employment opportunities were slow to trickle down to the more disadvantaged areas:

“When The Square was built...no-one in Tallaght got jobs...Not significant jobs. A lot of the people that came in to work in The Square were brought there. Businesses in The Square brought their staff with them but I’m talking about now the managerial staff...Whereas...I lived in Springfield at the time, a lot of the women there, our children were all at the stage where they could go out and get a job. Well, a lot of the people in Springfield, which was a private housing estate, would have got jobs in Tescos in Dunnes...checkouts and working like that. And then there was a lot of the kids in the schools got the job doing the trolleys and all that type of stuff. But, there was no big jobs, well-paid jobs, then at the time...created out of that. But, of course it’s changed now so much. Tallaght has really, kind of, mushroomed into a town. More of a city than a town! There’s 80,000 people living in Tallaght...around about that...” (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee member B).

Reflecting the situation throughout Dublin, Tallaght Town Centre has experienced a building boom in more recent years, with the rapid construction of apartments, offices, retail warehousing and shops. Nevertheless, parts of West Tallaght have retained their disadvantaged status, due to high concentrations of socio-economic deprivation.

Holistic Planning Initiatives Targeting West Tallaght

Tallaght Integrated Area Plan was preceded by a series of holistic planning initiatives with a community participation dimension, several of which specifically aimed to address social, economic and environmental disadvantage in West Tallaght. These initiatives included *Tallaght Town Centre 2000* in 1996, the South Dublin URBAN Initiative from 1996 to 1999, followed by the RAPID Programme from 2002 and the *West Tallaght Study* in 2003. Each of these holistic planning initiatives had a strong community participation element in the formulation and implementation of their plans and proposals. Indeed, a professional community planner was employed under the URBAN Initiative, who used the Planning for Real methodology to devise an award-winning environmental plan for Jobstown. The community participation mechanisms undertaken as part of these initiatives appeared to have established a certain level of trust between the communities of Tallaght and the various statutory bodies operating within the area and successfully developed effective channels of communication, as argued by a South Dublin County Council official:

“I think things are probably...changing and that there’s lines of communications that are developing all the time...Again going back to the URBAN Initiative and the IAP and things like the West Tallaght study and then RAPID. I think there’s a series of...programmes that are engaging with the community, that are providing new channels of communication. I know with the people that are involved in RAPID...they would be working closely with...both...the Community Development Section but also with...community activists that are living in the area” (South Dublin County Council official).

Thus, a series of holistic planning initiatives targeting disadvantage in West Tallaght, with a strong commitment to the principles of community participation, paved the way for meaningful community participation in the Tallaght Integrated Area Plan. Some of these initiatives, the URBAN Initiative and the RAPID Programme, operated on a relatively independent basis from the local authority. Nevertheless, South Dublin County Council appeared to have genuinely learned from the experience gained from these initiatives and incorporated the principles of community participation within their own planning processes.

Tallaght Integrated Area Plan

In 1998, both Tallaght and Clondalkin in South Dublin County were designated under the first IAP programme, with the adopted plans covering the period 1999 to mid-2006. Tallaght was the more significant Integrated Area Plan, in terms of the amount of land designated and the anticipated levels of investment:

“Even just looking at the sites gives you an idea of the extent, you know. If all the planning permissions that were granted were built...it’s half a million square meters...Almost replicating or more than replicating what has been in the town centre up to the mid-nineties, we’ll say...If all of this development was built and not all of it will be built but if it was all built, it would be about €0.7 of a billion, in terms of an investment. So, it’s very large” (South Dublin County Council official).

The aim of Tallaght Integrated Area Plan was “...to ensure that the Urban Renewal Scheme will address the physical, economic, social and environmental regeneration of Tallaght Town Centre and the disadvantaged West Tallaght neighbourhoods” (South Dublin County Council, 1998), with the following specific objectives:

- *To provide incentives to encourage an appropriate form of “Urban Town Centre” which should include a lively mix of uses, in particular a strong residential component.*
- *To provide incentives to encourage the revitalisation of the Neighbourhood Centres in West Tallaght.*
- *To develop a range of infrastructure facilities in both the Town Centre and West Tallaght appropriate to the population they serve.*
- *To provide 15% social housing in the Town Centre.*
- *To utilise the opportunities of urban renewal to tackle, in an integrated way, the problems associated with socio-economic exclusion.*
- *To employ a mechanism of transferring funds from the commercially successful Town Centre to the disadvantaged residential neighbourhood of West Tallaght.*
- *To encourage and support partnership arrangements to allow community and non profit organisations avail of the tax incentives.*
- *To promote and adopt co-operative and participative working arrangements and structures to implement the Integrated Area Plan”* (South Dublin County Council, 1998).

Thus, Tallaght IAP adopted the two-pronged approach of revitalising the commercially successful Major Town Centre of Tallaght and tackling socio-economic exclusion in the peripheral neighbourhoods of West Tallaght. The rationale underpinning this strategy was to compensate for the previous negative impact of tax-incentive driven town-centre development and to prevent the latest round of tax incentives under the 1998 Urban Renewal Scheme from compounding the problem. The opening of The Square Shopping Centre in the mid-nineties had led to vacancies and dereliction in several neighbourhood centres, from which they had never recovered:

“We combined the disadvantaged areas into the IAP. I suppose previously...a lot of the development that happened in Tallaght up until the mid-nineties was really happening from the first urban renewal scheme, including The Square. I mean, [named property development company] wouldn’t build The Square until they got designation. And then having The Square, having been built, it had a negative knock-on effect on some of the surrounding neighbourhood centres” (South Dublin County Council official).

Under the Tallaght Integrated Area Plan, 23 ‘Category A’ sites were designated for tax incentives within Tallaght Town Centre, while a further 9 ‘Category B’ sites were designated within the neighbourhood centres serving the disadvantaged residential areas of Killinarden, Jobstown, Kiltalown, Brookfield and Fettercairn in West Tallaght.

Community Participation in the Formulation of Tallaght IAP

With Chapter 2 of the Tallaght Integrated Area Plan focusing on “*Public Participation, the findings of work done to date by organisations within the County*”, South Dublin County Council took onboard the main issues and required actions already identified by URBAN, the *Tallaght Town Centre 2000 Plan*, the Enterprise Board, Tallaght West Forum and the Chamber of Commerce (South Dublin County Council, 1998). Many of these reports and

plans were informed by extensive community participation. Nevertheless, the formulation of Tallaght IAP was informed by a further dedicated community participation process. Initially, relevant statutory bodies were informed of the IAP process and invited to participate. These bodies comprised Combat Poverty, Eastern Health Board, Dublin Tourism, Tallaght South Dublin Chamber of Commerce, Institute of Technology Tallaght, URBAN, Tallaght Partnership, Forfas, Forbairt, FAS and FAS Employment Services Office. This was followed by a series of informal meetings with representatives of interested organisations and property owners, including URBAN, Tallaght Partnership, the Tallaght 2000 Committee and the Chamber of Commerce, outlining the 1998 Urban Renewal Scheme guidelines and inviting submissions (South Dublin County Council, 1998):

“In Tallaght, the whole town centre, there has been a plan carried out for that, that particular area back, in about 1995/96, the Tallaght Town Centre 2000 plan. And there had been a public consultation process that had gone into that, you know. So, that plan was produced about a year before...the IAP was produced. So, the whole vision that was outlined in that plan was really, kind of, taken fully onboard and then put into the development plan. Now, it involved, I think there might have been two or three meetings with interested parties, at kind of group meetings. And then individual meetings with some of the larger land owners. That was the type of consultation that I was involved in” (South Dublin County Council official).

In March 1998, South Dublin County Council, in association with URBAN and Tallaght Partnership, held a seminar on *The 1998 Urban Renewal Scheme*. Invitations to attend were issued to 160 networked community groups and statutory bodies identified by URBAN, Tallaght Partnership and South Dublin County Council. Representatives of 50 organisations attended the seminar. The provisions of the Urban Renewal Scheme were outlined at this initial seminar, the priorities identified by previous consultation processes were reviewed and workshops with attendees were held. The workshop participants were asked to consider and provide feedback on the three questions of how the Urban Renewal Scheme could best benefit West Tallaght, where proposed improvements could be situated and how further consultation on the Draft Integrated Area Plan should be undertaken (South Dublin County Council, 1998):

“I think there’s always some plan that’s being devised for West Tallaght, so there are different layers of consultation that have gone on. But, it was the...EU URBAN Initiative, or the Partnership. So I suppose...the various consultations that had happened were all...looked at and then there was a...morning seminar, in relation to where - I suppose, some of the - what had come out of the previous consultations were produced. The whole idea of the integrated area plan was explained and then the residents were asked, you know, there was a series of questions asked, to debate. What did people, you know, what did they hope for from the integrated area plan and where would they like to see developments happen?...What type of procedures would they like to see, you know, how would they like to be involved in the ongoing thing. And then that, you know, that was a successful seminar. It was well attended. And then that was written up by - It was originally written up by the South Dublin County Council but the next draft of it was actually written up by a combination of the Partnership and the South Dublin URBAN Initiative people. And that - the way that they wrote that up again was parachuted fully into the IAP, with some, I think, some very beneficial, you know, results in that” (South Dublin County Council official).

It is interesting to note that community gain, via a Community Linkage Fund, dominated one community representative’s recollections of this seminar. Presumably the availability of a new source of grant-funding attracted the attention of many community organisations:

“...there was a consultation process way back...in Tallaght, around having this IAP linkage fund. Which was based on the...Boston Linkage Fund. It was a similar thing where the tax incentives...from the build went to the local communities, particularly if it was around a disadvantaged area. That idea came from there. So, the Council came and there was a quite a big crowd now. It was in the Amberley Court, a good few years ago. And they asked local people...and the community reps in the area...what they thought

should be the build etc. and what should they not do and all the rest. It was consultation process. Now, it doesn't say that it would be followed! But out of that, it was a good few years later, they brought together the IAP monitoring committee" (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member B).

Following the adoption of Tallaght Integrated Area Plan, further measures to promote the participation of the wider community in the IAP process were relatively limited. Around late-2002, South Dublin County Council held one further open meeting, for the purpose of outlining progress on the implementation of the plan at the half-way point. Information on progress was also circulated to community groups in the area, in the form of comprehensive Annual Reports:

"While I think there was good participation initially, at the moment it would be more...providing information, I think would still be going quite well. In that...we've got the annual reports and they're sent out...We've got a good...listing of community groups and agencies and things like that, that they're all sent out to. Now, we've just had one...open meeting since the thing started. About two years ago [late-2002], we showed all the plans that were in the pipeline and...going through the scheme" (South Dublin County Council official).

Community Participation in the Implementation of Tallaght IAP

During the implementation phase, following the formulation and adoption of the Integrated Area Plan, the primary mechanism for community participation was the Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee. Comprising eleven members, Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee was responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Integrated Area Plan. In addition to four representatives of South Dublin County Council, employers, trade unions, statutory bodies and community groups were represented on the Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee, including South Dublin Chamber of Commerce, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, South Dublin County Enterprise Board, Tallaght Partnership, South Dublin Community Forum, South Dublin Community Platform and Tallaght Historical Society.

Achievements

Community Gain

Two sources of funding were established under Tallaght Integrated Area Plan: South Dublin County Council's Financial Package and the Community Linkage Fund. It was intended that *"...the resources from both funds will be utilised in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in West Tallaght in accordance with the vision detailed in the IAP and the RAPID plan for the area"* (South Dublin County Council, 2003). Representatives of the County Council, other statutory bodies and the community on the IAP Monitoring Committee all seemed to feel that the IAP Funding package was an innovative and successful mechanism for transferring some of the benefits of the tax incentives in the Town Centre to the disadvantaged communities of West Tallaght.

1. South Dublin County Council Financial Package: Capital Investment in West Tallaght

South Dublin County Council earmarked income from the three following sources for the provision of works, facilities and infrastructure in the West Tallaght designated sites and the surrounding area:

- Net receipts from the increase in capital value of designated sites in the Town Centre area in the ownership of South Dublin County Council;
- Resources arising from the sale of designated sites in the West Tallaght area in the ownership of South Dublin County Council;
- For a five-year period, rates receipts from new rateable valuations in Town Centre sites.

In 1999, South Dublin County Council underwrote several South Dublin URBAN Initiative projects, which proved to have significant shortfalls in funding. The Tallaght IAP provided for the utilisation of the IAP Funding Package to secure these projects, including Fettercairn

Community Centre (including drugs unit), Fettercairn Youth Horse Project, Jobstown Playground, Killinarden Community Centre and Killinarden Enterprise Centre.

2. The Community Linkage Fund: Revenue Funding for West Tallaght

South Dublin County Council considered the Community Linkage Fund to be one of the most innovative aspects of Tallaght Integrated Area Plan. Developers of sites designated for tax incentives were required to make pay a Community Linkage Contribution, which was set at €2.54 per sq.ft. of floorspace developed (excluding multi-storey or underground car-parking), immediately prior to receiving their Final Tax Incentive. Described as “...a mechanism to transfer some of the benefits from the successful Town Centre sites to the disadvantaged areas of West Tallaght...”, the core purpose of the resultant Community Linkage Fund was: “...to assist the development of projects and programmes to address local community need and enhance the quality of life for people living in IAP designated communities”. The four IAP designated neighbourhoods in West Tallaght eligible to benefit from the Community Linkage Funds were Brookfield, Fettercairn, Jobstown and Killinarden. The community representatives on the IAP Monitoring Committee concurred that most of their efforts in recent years had focused on developing and implementing this community gain mechanism:

“...there was a few people in the IAP that they came together and they worked on that [proposal for the Community Linkage Fund], a small working group, and they came up with that. So, our meetings were mainly around that and modifying it and looking at the guidelines and making sure that all the guidelines were there and the procedure for funding” (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member B).

Indeed, monitoring the implementation of the Community Linkage Fund was cited as the primary reason for remaining on the IAP Monitoring Committee in the case of one community representative:

“...After that consultation in Tallaght, like, we didn't really hear an awful lot because the URBAN Initiative came into place then. But...we kept quite a close eye on the linkage, the proposed linkage fund. So, that it was about two years before anything started to happen and then the building started and the tax incentive was in place...There was a bit of a shortfall at the end of the URBAN renewal and there was a fear that the money from the IAP would be used to fill that shortfall...But that's why it was important that we stayed on the IAP monitoring committee” (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member B).

As the Community Linkage Fund would continue to grow until the conclusion of the IAP in 2006, there were two rounds of applications for funding under the Community Linkage Fund. The first round of applications was in 2004, when the sum of €400,000 was made available. Applications for grants in the range of €10,000 to €40,000 were invited from non-profit organisations in the local government, local and community development, statutory and social partner sectors, under the four themes of (a) youth and youth work, (b) community, (c) community / personal safety and (d) cross-cutting applications. Two information seminars were held for those interested in applying to the fund, in Fettercairn Community Centre and Killinarden Enterprise Centre, which were attended by members of the IAP Monitoring Committee:

“...we had a few consultation meetings in the different areas in Tallaght, where some of us from the IAP monitoring committee were asked to be there and just give people the background on...how it's functioning and how it came about etc. and where that money was coming from” (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member B).

A seven-member Assessment Panel, comprising two representatives of South Dublin County Council, two elected representatives, two 'external independent experts' and one community / local development representative, assessed the 57 applications received. These applications were assessed under the following six pre-determined criteria:

- “A commitment to targeting those at risk of poverty and disadvantage.
 - The development of proposals by a number of organisations which include local involvement and collaboration and is particularly inclusive of local stakeholders.
 - An integrated approach that shows awareness of how the project relates to and is integrated into the development of the area.
 - A degree of innovation and provides additionality rather than duplicates existing actions / programmes.
 - A clear strategy, actions, targets and outcomes.
 - A capacity to produce learning,”
- (South Dublin County Council, 2004).

The Assessment Panel recommended thirteen projects for funding, with a reserve list of four, and also made several recommendations for the second round of funding applications. The successful applicants under the first round were Tallaght Travellers Youth Services, Jobstown Childcare Centre, Citywise, Jobstown Estate Management Committee, West Dublin YMCA, Special Project on Long Term Unemployment, Sure Start School ‘Familiarisation’ Pilot Project, Tallaght Partnership ‘Tallzens’ Project, PARTAS, Tallaght Youth Service, Tallaght Volunteer Bureau, An Cosan The Shanty Educational Project, Tallaght Homeless Advice Unit.

Feedback to the IAP Monitoring Committee from the community representatives regarding the operation of the Community Linkage Fund was properly considered and adjustments were made to the scheme for the second round of applications:

“...there were a few concerns that the more up-and-running projects, that were well able to do funding proposals, got money whereas the very small, little groups didn’t seem to get it. So, there was a second round and we brought the concerns to the IAP monitoring group, that we would like to have seen more of the smaller groups get something anyway...But if you were too small, it wasn’t the appropriate place for you to be for the linkage because there are other small grants, say for sports clubs, football or boxing clubs. Someone wanted boxing gloves for the club or something But, they could apply. So, that was the kind of thing we were trying to tell the people at the consultation meetings out in the community before the funds came into place. But the second round, it was great to see only there a while back - There was a very small little group here, they meet out here somewhere in Brookfield. And there was a woman trying to get this dancing club going, Irish dancing. And they had nothing, they had no money, only the subscriptions from the children or whatever, you know, fifty cent or something every night they came. And they had a huge amount of children. So, my workers here helped her with her application for it but it didn’t come out in the first round, you know, and she was very disappointed. And we were kind of saying ‘Oh, you know, we would have loved to have seen the smaller groups like that...’. Because they’re kind of very invisible but they’re doing really good work in the area. So, they actually did get some money in the second round...” (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member B).

The ring-fencing of two separate funds for revenue funding for community groups and capital funding for infrastructural works, under the Community Linkage Fund and the South Dublin County Council Financial Package respectively, had clear advantages in terms of ensuring openness and transparency in the IAP Financial Package. Furthermore, the Community Linkage Fund yielded tangible benefits for community groups in West Tallaght, engendering widespread support of the IAP process.

Community Support

Little dissatisfaction arose in relation to the implementation of Tallaght IAP among the community representatives on the Monitoring Committee. Nor was any respondent aware of any dissatisfaction within the wider community, although it must be borne in mind that only members of the Monitoring Committee were interviewed. The broad community support of the manner in which Tallaght IAP was implemented was attributed by one respondent to the IAP’s very specific focus on sites designated for tax incentives. It was felt that the limited

number of designated sites within run-down neighbourhood centres in West Tallaght were relatively uncontested spaces, negating the perceived need for many people within the wider community to participate in the IAP process. Effective pre-existing avenues of participation were also highlighted as a factor which may have diminished the need to voice any concerns within the IAP framework:

“I think that in these neighbourhoods, the designated sites were very particular sites, which were around the development of community infrastructure and / or retail spaces and so on. And so...there is a shared view about the need to build community infrastructure and sort out the awful shops that have been around here to date...If the IAP area had been the whole area, encompassing all the infill housing and the new build, we’d have been in a terribly different space. But, the IAP focus in these neighbourhoods is a relatively uncontested area and so...people didn’t particularly need to engage with it. And what you do have of course in parallel is, for instance in respect of the local shops here, is a very close interface between the local authority and the Community Council, around any developments in the neighbourhood. So...representation on the IAP is less significant than it might otherwise be because there are all kinds of alternative representative mechanisms or contact mechanisms. Now, I’m not sure if I’m just rationalising that or not but I think that’s a fair reflection of what I think is the position” (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member D).

In contrast to the Liberties / Coombe IAP, the Tallaght IAP did not include a design framework, which may have been an additional factor contributing to the broad community support of the IAP. Designated sites were generally located at a substantial distance from most West Tallaght residents’ homes, either in the Tallaght Town Centre or in run-down Neighbourhood Centres in West Tallaght. Therefore, the issues of building height, site coverage, plot ratio, sunlight and daylight on designated sites were perhaps less critical to the community of West Tallaght. The exclusion of potentially contentious detailed design issues from the remit of the IAP ensured that the IAP Monitoring Committee maintained a strategic focus on the delivery of the aims of the IAP:

“The IAP is a much less detailed map [than the plans for Tallaght Town Centre], actually. The IAP map only includes buildings and...development projects, that are on-going. And then reference to the funds coming out of each one, the transfer funds, and stuff like that. That’s about all that goes on the IAP maps. They’re quite sketchy, they’re not really planner’s maps” (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member C).

Missed Opportunities

Slow Pace of Change in the Culture of South Dublin County Council

The community representatives on the IAP Monitoring Committee felt that South Dublin County Council has traditionally failed to engage with the community but is gradually changing its *modus operandi* to consult with communities regarding plans and proposals for Tallaght. Indeed, all of the respondents all reported good access to planners and other officials in the Council. One community representative attributed this change in approach to national policy imperatives, obliging the local authorities to change their practices:

“I would have to say, this is a personal view, I think the County Council...are being forced to do certain things. If they had a choice, my belief is that they would simply do things the way they’ve always done it and that’s go ahead and don’t bother talking to anybody. But, because of new legislation and new ways of working and best practice approach and all of that, they’re being forced to do things that they wouldn’t necessarily particularly want to do. And they happen to a certain level. But true integration and consultation, the only time I have really seen it in action was at that recent meeting for the Town Centre. I got another notice last week, about a meeting this week in relation to the arts development plan, which again would never have happened before. So, you know, maybe there is a change coming. But to date, I would say that the change is because it’s being forced upon people. It’s not necessarily one of choice. But that is categorically a personal viewpoint” (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member A).

Arguing that her organisation's relationship with South Dublin County Council had improved enormously since its establishment in 1998, another community representative felt that the Council was learning from the community sector's consensus-building approach, resulting in a shift in the Council's approach over the past ten years:

"It's [working in the public sector] like being in the private sector...Here we work on consensus and we work more...as a team...It seems you do an awful lot of meetings and talking about the thing but you have to consult 'till you're blue in the face. And it's not just having one meeting and everyone is there and you're telling the people 'Well, this is going to happen, this is going to happen, this is going to happen'...I think the Council are learning a bit from the community sector, in Tallaght anyway, about consultation and the process...I would be ten years in community development in Tallaght and there's a huge shift in understanding and that between the Council and the community sector..." (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member B).

Indeed, all of the respondents concurred that South Dublin County Council was now trying to encourage and promote community participation in planning, with two respondents citing the example of proposals for Tallaght Town Centre as evidence. However, the shift towards a less authoritarian, more discursive form of planning in South Dublin seemed uneven and it was noted that various developments, including Tallaght Village and Virginia House, went ahead without consultation:

"Yeah [South Dublin County Council is trying to encourage community participation in planning] well I would have to say now, with this new planning map that they issued, that they did contact anyone involved in the community, that they had contact numbers for, and invited them to a choice of four meetings, over about two or three weeks. And the meetings were held here in the County Hall and the planners were all there at each meeting...they hired a professional person...an agency, consultancy and that, for to give a presentation - which lasted I think about 25 minutes or so, on the new plan. And then we broke up into small groups and we each had a planner, a representative from the Planning Department and a note-taker with us. So, the issues that people wanted to bring up were brought up there, with the note taker present and there were full notes taken of them. So, they were fully discussed. And those issues were all brought back into the thing...So, yeah, they certainly made a sincere effort to contact people and I'm sure they got a lot of responses and a lot of written submissions out of it" (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member C).

"...for the first time ever in my involvement in the community sector, we actually got pre-development consultation recently around this new proposal for the Town Centre in Tallaght...As part of our pre-budget submission, we made a scathing attack on our planners and developers and the fact that there's never any public consultation...I mean, consultation with the community it is just non-existent...Then after Christmas, this whole consultation was engaged...around the planned new Town Centre, which is a wonderful idea. They want to develop this cosmopolitan type area between The Square, the Civic Offices of the County Council and the Tallaght Hospital. However, doing that in isolation from the rest of Tallaght is nonsensical. It's totally ridiculous. If it's going to be the centre, well then it has to be the hub, which means that there's huge infrastructural work will have to be done. There's enormous other development that will have to happen, in order to keep it in line with everything else that they want to do around the Town Centre. And they will need to expand the Luas, out further to the likes of City West, so that they have easy access of coming in as well. So, there's a whole clutter of things that need to go in tandem with this plan. And I would have vehemently argued that, on the night of the consultation. I don't know what other proposals are going to come in. We're at the moment compiling our own additional submission, to go alongside that. But, if you take the old Tallaght Village for example, they are building left, right and centre there and there has been no consultation around that. Now, the traffic congestion in the Tallaght Village at the present is unbelievable. And if we're putting in four new apartment blocks, where's that going to leave us, you know? So, you have a situation where Virginia House, which was a beautiful building, it was the Arts Centre, was knocked down. A Council building...which they had put a lot of money into renovating. But they just simply knocked it

down and they're building a thirteen-storey apartment block on the site, which again was ludicrous" (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member A).

Thus, the change in the culture of South Dublin County Council seems very slow, which is perhaps not surprising in the context of its size and bureaucratic constraints.

Perceived Lack of Commitment to Principles Underpinning Community Participation

Most progress with regard to community participation in the planning system appears to have been made with regard to disseminating information and seeking the community's views, which has clear benefits from the point of view of both openness and ensuring that decision-making is informed by local knowledge. However, concerns were expressed that the community's views, although carefully noted by the local authority as part of participation mechanisms, often seem to have little influence on the final outcomes of decisions.

"The current Director of Community, a very nice man, but he's very much old school. And while you can get to him, I'm never sure that anything you say to him goes beyond..." (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member A).

"I think the only big thing that people would be concerned about would be not being listened to and that the planning will go ahead anyway. And a lot of the time, it does happen..." (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member B).

"...I think everything is...taken down but...I seriously wonder who makes the final decisions because some of the decisions that are made have to be purely financial decisions and that's not necessarily the best way of doing things. I mean, if you're seriously engaged to make life better for the people who live in the Council area that you're responsible for, well then you have to take seriously the views of those people living there. And for me and certainly this is the view of my organisation, too many of the people who make the decisions about planning for South Dublin County Council live in Foxrock or the other side of the city. So, the decisions they make don't affect them directly. So, if you're making decisions around Killinarden or Jobstown or Fettercairn, well you really aren't too bothered because it's not going to adversely affect your life...So, you make it based on what? And maybe that's the question: what are the decisions made on and who has the final say?" (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member A).

Thus, the community representatives clearly felt that there was generally room for improvement with regard to community input to the decision-making process.

With regard to the business of the IAP Monitoring Committee in particular, the community representatives felt that their views were given proper consideration. However, the issue of whether their participation had any bearing on outcomes remained a concern. It was felt that local-authority officials, although receptive, were often restricted by the local-authority bureaucracy:

"They [the community representatives' views and concerns] would be [taken seriously]. Yeah, they would be listened to alright. You would get a fair hearing alright, yeah. Whether past the table there, if they went on further, if they were heard is another thing, you know what I mean? Within the IAP monitoring group itself...you will be listened to and it'll probably go down in the minutes and that. But after that then, I don't know the process. Like within the Council itself...it's kind of a bureaucracy thing...if you get an individual then you can get their ear, that's fine. But, I think they're blocked within it, with all the pecking order. That, I think, is a difficulty within the Council..." (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member B).

"Oh yes, I do actually [think planners and other officials take the community's views and concerns seriously]. I think our planners here are very good in that respect, any of them that I've met, anyway. I mean, a couple of them came on a historical tour of the old areas of the village with me...and took photographs of the different artefacts and the landscape involved and took a lot of notes on that...I'd say they do take your views seriously. They do their best.

Of course, I know there are a lot of pressures within a Planning Department, that I probably wouldn't be aware of. You know, you just hear things but nothing concrete. But, there's always, kind of, different agendas that happen there and I wouldn't be privy to them" (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member C).

Monitoring Rather Than Steering Role

Aside from community participation in the formulation of the plan, the community's continuing involvement in the Integrated Area Plan primarily took the form of representation on a monitoring committee. While the distinction may seem minor, representation on a Monitoring Committee rather than a Steering Committee effectively relegated the community to the position of observers rather than decision-makers. One community representative commented that the IAP Monitoring Committee was not necessarily made aware of plans and proposals in time to take action:

"The IAP is a monitoring group so you're in a monitoring role. So, if there was something mad or daft being proposed and if you did know about it in advance - It doesn't necessarily mean that you would know about it in advance...- but you'd at least be able to bring that back to the [Community] Platform and then...the Platform would inform its membership" (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member B).

However, it was noted that the Monitoring Committee was at least a good method of disseminating information to community groups.

Even in cases where the IAP Monitoring Committee heard about plans and proposals prior to implementation, the ability of the community representatives to exert influence over the decision-making process was questioned:

"Well, it's a bit of both [whether the IAP Monitoring Committee is kept informed of plans and proposals or finds out about them afterwards]. It's not that you don't know about it but I don't know if you can do a lot about it, do you know. There's consultation and there's consultation!...I mean, one person, you know, there's 80,000 people in Tallaght, if you think about it like that. And if there's one person representing the [Community] Platform on an IAP monitoring group, it's not a huge amount of input, if you like" (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member B).

Limited Effectiveness of Community Representation

In Tallaght, community representation on the IAP Monitoring Committee was through Tallaght Partnership, Tallaght Community Platform, Tallaght Community Forum and Tallaght Historical Society. Representation *via* larger organisations with an area-wide remit and, in some cases, with full-time staffing and previous experience of co-operating with South Dublin County Council, has clear implications for promoting a strategic rather than parochial perspective and for working effectively with the local authority. It was envisaged that the elected representatives on the IAP Monitoring Committee would relay the views of individuals and smaller community groups, such as residents' associations. However, a South Dublin County Council official felt that political representation had not been effective in this regard:

"...A difference I have noticed with some of the Corporation [IAPs] is that...the three community representatives, which are written into the guidelines, here I think were taken up by the South Dublin Urban Initiative, the Community Platform and the Tallaght Partnership. And that has, I think, that has had implications...That may well have happened because all of those groups, right, the Tallaght Partnership... - the Community Platform's a newer organisation - but certainly the Tallaght Partnership had worked well with the Council and the South Dublin URBAN Initiative. It was one of the partners in that initiative. What we haven't got there is actual residents' associations per se. And I think that the idea behind that was that they would be represented through the councillor, the elected representation...But...that idea, that...if there were particular concerns for instance being...taken onboard and represented through the political representation, I don't think that has worked. You know, from the monitoring committee, you do not hear the elected representatives coming along and

saying 'Well, I have received representation from such and such and they're not happy with this planning application coming in'" (South Dublin County Council official).

Furthermore, one relatively new community representative on the IAP Monitoring Committee argued that she and her predecessors felt that the influence of the community representatives on the Monitoring Committee was quite limited. It was felt that the balance of power lay with the political representatives:

"My colleagues...would feel that it's predominantly politically influenced. And I mean, I went and spoke to people that had acted in my capacity previous to me, just to see what their views were...I suppose, the easiest way of saying this is that perhaps the community representation is not taken seriously by the political side. And that's something that we're going to have to work very hard on changing" (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member A).

Professionals and Jargon

Engaging with professionals in debates around policy issues can be very intimidating for community representatives, particularly those with limited previous experience of such fora. Local authority protocols for meetings can be overly formal, which can be daunting for community representatives, as illustrated by the following example of Strategic Policy Committee meetings:

"...at the beginning of the SPCs, people had dreadful problems...I know the person who went to the first SPC, going right back to the beginning when we were asked to put two people on the SPCs. The person went in and she's a hard nut, she said 'I was being called an outside body!' and she was saying a foreign body, 'I'm not a foreign body!' They have the circle, you know the way the Council meets, and...you had to know where you sat...you had a place. So then if you weren't in that inner circle, then you had to sit out here. So, you wouldn't just sit up beside Joe Bloggs if you knew him or her...'No. Sorry, you're an outside body'. In other words, you're not in the inner circle. You had to find your place and that was quite a shock to her" (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member B).

The terminology and abbreviations widely used by professionals can exclude community representatives from having a meaningful input to debates. Perhaps due to the difficulties of developing a common language, one community representative noted that the community sector sometimes tends to engage in debates in an overly emotive fashion, thereby reducing the validity of its input in the eyes of professionals. However, the community representatives on the IAP Monitoring Committee generally concurred that the plans and maps produced by South Dublin County Council were clear and easy to understand and that the local-authority officials involved in the Monitoring Committee were clear and did not use exclusive language or jargon:

"No, they [planners and other officials] didn't [use jargon]. They didn't use jargon. I think they've gone beyond that now! No, they spoke in a very accessible manner, altogether" (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member C)

Nevertheless, it was argued that community representatives sometimes need to attend several meetings before gaining the confidence to make a serious contribution to the debate. In the context of the small number of meetings each year, this can result in a serious loss of community input to decision-making. Consequently, Tallaght Community Forum had embarked on a programme of capacity-building, with all of its representatives on various committees undertaking training and development courses, to increase the effectiveness of their input:

"One of the things that the Forum will be doing in the next period is engaging in training and development for their representatives on all of the different committees, SPCs, IAPs,

management committee, all of that. So that they'll have the ammunition or be given the ammunition and will know how to use it, in trying to get the views of the membership fully heard. I think previously, maybe one of the things was that you're inclined, from this sector, to become too emotive...If you're not working on a daily basis in the environment and haven't learned the lingo or know the abbreviations, you can be a bit lost when you get into the Council chamber...I know for a fact because of my own personal experience. It didn't bother me! It was quite an exciting prospect to become involved in an SPC and to sit in the Council chamber and have the opportunity to debate views and opinions and decision-making. But for others, who wouldn't necessarily have had previous experience of either debating or making presentations or standing up and making a strong argument on a point, it would have possibly taken them quite a number of meetings. And when you're only meeting four times a year, that can be a huge loss to the community sector in finding the voice. So, that's why we're going to engage in all of this training and development, so that people will feel more comfortable about doing that sort of thing" (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member A).

In the context of these difficulties, it is not surprising that one community representative was more inclined to focus on the poverty-proofing of strategies. She felt that she had insufficient expertise in physical planning issues, which she saw as the remit of South Dublin County Council:

"Personally, that's [the IAP Monitoring Committee] the only thing I've ever been involved in around planning. So, I'm not a planner and there's nobody, no planners, on the Platform. We...would be more inclined to be involved with making sure that things are poverty-proofed, making sure that this is not going to affect or damage local areas, you know. So, that type of monitoring. We wouldn't be monitoring about the build as much. Because the County Council has its own plan of work and whoever influences that I don't know, because that's their...plan" (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member B).

Her role in relation to physical planning was limited to providing information to other members of the community group, who may have the necessary expertise to assess developments, and then provide feedback to the IAP Monitoring Committee. However, it was noted that this reporting and feedback process is often prohibitively slow:

"...I'm not an expert in planning either. But, the only thing that I could do is...bring back the feedback, bring back the stuff to the [Tallaght Community] Platform...and then whoever has expertise in that field might be able to do something...It's really a monitoring role, the same as this monitoring committee's on the County Development Board. There's the different themes, monitoring groups, where they...monitor the implementation of the plan. So, if there's things not going right, the monitoring committees...discuss it and then it comes back. But, it's a very slow filtering back..." (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member B).

Access to Information

South Dublin County Council appeared to perform very well with regard to making information about forward planning available to both the Monitoring Committee and the general public. Its web-site was cited as a particularly good source of up-to-date information, although it is important to note that not everybody is computer-literate and has access to a computer:

"The County Council are pushing their web-site and everything goes up on the web-site. So if you're technically minded, you can get just about anything you need to get by going up on the web-site. Not everybody is" (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member A).

However, it was noted that it is important to avoid complacency and one community representative felt that there was potential to develop a more innovative approach of awareness-raising within communities:

“...I think there’s a whole element about the likes of Government and Councils feeling that they’re part of everyday life, they’re institutional, so they don’t really need to do anything about promoting themselves. And I think that’s a mistake. I think the whole concept now that we have engaged in, of this new style of local government involvement, is a really good one. It’s the way we should continue to go but we have to make sure that everybody understands what it’s about and that everybody has an opportunity to actively participate, if they so wish. And the only way they can do that is by having the information. And by saying that ‘We have a wonderful web-site and you can access everything’ isn’t perhaps enough. And maybe there needs to be some more other types of things gotten out there, whether that’s some sort of a newsletter that happens or whether there are exhibitions in places like The Square...information exhibitions in the library, in The Square. Not just to confine it to traditional places because people go through shopping centres on a regular basis and they will stop out of curiosity and look. But, we can’t be clapping ourselves on the back and saying...‘We’re doing a good job here’. But, then I come up and I say to you ‘What do you do? Because I don’t know’. So, we have to try and make sure that people understand what we’re doing, why we’re doing it. And then maybe they might still choose not to actively engage but at least they’ve had the opportunity to do so and they’ve been given all the facts and figures. And I’m not just saying that this is the responsibility of the Councils. It’s also the responsibility of the likes of the organisations like ourselves, the Community Forum and the Community Platform, to try and inform our membership of what’s happening” (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member A).

South Dublin County Council performed less well with regard to circulating information about individual planning applications and proposals. While it was felt that the Tallaght communities had the capacity to campaign against unwelcome proposals, whether information trickled down in sufficient time to mount a campaign was open to question:

“...I would say that if something was happening - I think in Tallaght that there is a good lobbying group...I think that there’s a lot of people...who want to become local councillors and they would be activists and they would, kind of, kick up a bit of a stir. But at the same time, I’m here and I didn’t know that there was a centre being built here across [the road]...I wasn’t quite sure what it was. But then again, that’s probably my own fault for not being more aware of what’s happening” (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member B).

Even the IAP Monitoring Committee seemed to enjoy limited advance notice of individual proposals:

“...you wouldn’t be sent out the plans...You’d have to go looking for them, if you wanted to find out if they were...going to build something off the wall” (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member B).

This problem largely stemmed from the Committee’s designated monitoring rather than implementation role. The IAP Monitoring Committee did not necessarily hear about proposals in sufficient time to take any action.

Resources

Access to resources did not seem to have presented any serious barrier to the participation of the community groups represented on the Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee. Presumably, the broad lack of contention regarding the Integrated Area Plan, which largely negated the need to lodge planning appeals or run campaigns against proposals, reduced the need for resources:

“That [lack of funding] hasn’t really arisen for us, I would have to say...I mean obviously, the Forum and the Platform do receive a portion of money to do things with. And to date, there hasn’t been an issue about - you know, we would be able to bring in consultants for different things that we’ve had to do, preparing plans or whatever. So, that hasn’t been an issue. And in some instances, we would have that expertise within the membership anyway and you would use that” (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member A).

Nevertheless, one group identified lack of funding as a serious issue facing the community and voluntary sector in general, particularly with regard to staff retention:

“...there’s been huge changes in community...really big changes...because of the cut-backs in funding...And it’s really getting difficult really because people move on, you know. If you’ve no certainty around jobs and that, people move on to the private sector or whatever, keep shifting” (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member B).

The marked inequality of power between the community representatives and the representatives of other stakeholders on the IAP Monitoring Committee emerged as a more fundamental issue affecting the outcomes of community participation. The community representatives lacked the necessary resources with which to bargain or negotiate with statutory bodies. Thus, while community and statutory organisations were ‘partners’ in the regeneration process, their differential access to resources rendered them partners of unequal status:

“...you’re talking about one person, not with the great clout that somebody in a County Council or in a health board would have...Because even around the County Development Board, the people there would be people who actually have a final say or have quite a good say in their organisation, VEC or FÁS...I mean at one stage around the table in the County Development Board, you would have had the Commissioner from the Gards...So I mean, he would have quite a lot of knowledge and say of what’s happening in his department. Whereas someone like myself, who was a rep for the [Tallaght Community] Platform, you’re just a representative for a number of groups. You don’t have a huge amount of say or you can’t say ‘Well of course, we’ll do that, that and that’. And then you come back to the group and they say ‘Sorry, we just don’t have the resources to do that or do that’... So, that’s the difference between the statutory and the voluntary sector is the resources...If you have any department, any statutory agency, will have huge resources. And they’d have five or six admin...to do a particular piece of work. Whereas a project like here...we’ve one half-time person to do the books, you know. The Platform has one full-time worker and we struggle to pay her...And there’s a limit to what you can do. You can’t do fieldwork, as well as do admin, as well as do lobbying, you know, you’ve to do all that. So, the resources are not there for the Platform. Definitely not!” (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member B).

Apathy, Modern Lifestyles and Organisational Renewal

An element of apathy was identified, arising from people feeling that their involvement would not make any difference, presented a barrier to community participation in the Integrated Area Plan:

“I think there is an element of apathy, I have to say. I think people have lost the ability to trust the process. And there’s going to be a little bit of education required on our behalf - and by that I mean the Forum and the Platform-type groups - to sort of get out there and say ‘Look, you know, we can have a meaningful impact on local government decision-making. It’s not going to happen today or tomorrow. But, if we don’t engage in the process and ensure that the process works, then we’ll never have the opportunity. This opportunity has been given to us now and we have to grasp it with both hands’. And it’s about, I suppose, the people who have a belief and an understanding, keeping their motivation and drive going, in order to bring the other people along with them” (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member A).

The practical demands of modern life also means that people generally have less time to devote voluntary work than was traditionally the case:

“I think we have to accept that modern day society is very different from anything that we’ve had before. It’s much faster, there are much more distractions. In a lot of cases, where previously you would have had one partner staying at home and raising the children, you now have, where there are two partners, mostly both partners working. And there are longer hours entailed. If you’re working, then you have to ensure that you’re around to get the kids to dancing or get them to football or get them to whatever. So, a lot of the time is spent either working or driving around, getting your kids to A, B and C. And it doesn’t leave a lot of time to

do other things. So...it takes people that are prepared to give up their own personal time to do it and that can be quite difficult. There's not a lot of lunatics like me around, who get involved in lots of things and need that for their own well-being..." (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member A).

Finally, one of the community groups represented on the IAP Monitoring Committee was facing particular difficulties with regard to the renewal and sustainability of the organisation. The founder members of Tallaght Historical Society were now elderly and no longer taking an active interest in the work of the Society. Without expanding its membership, the organisation was losing its impetus, with clear implications for the effectiveness of its participation in the IAP Monitoring Committee:

"...the Historical Society was set up...between 25 and thirty years ago. Now, it was set up by a local group of individuals who - the remainder of that are still around - are mostly elderly ladies. And they don't take very much of an active part now, they've kind of taken a back seat. And as I was saying to you, about two years ago, they asked me to take over as chairperson, really to save the Society at the time. But, I would only regard myself as a caretaker chairperson! Because I don't have the time or the energy really, to push it forward the way it would need to be, for to get new, fresh members and all that in, you know. And I have a lot of things on hand" (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member C):

Timeframe

Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee met relatively infrequently, about six times per year:

"There's a Tallaght IAP and a Clondalkin IAP and then we used to meet jointly. But, there are not that many in the year, probably about - I think we meet six times a year. It's about maybe six-weekly or something" (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member B).

While this did not appear to be an excessive commitment, one community worker highlighted the resource constraints under which her organisation was operating, pointing out that it is often impossible for a community worker to attend all meetings unless planning issues are specifically included within their job description:

"...people in community can't attend all of these things that are being organised either. Because you're restricted in what you can attend either...So, unless you have a particular remit within your job to work - [including attendance at such meetings]" (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member B).

Finally, community participation is an inherently slow process. Community representatives on the IAP Monitoring Committee must consult the membership of their organisations, prior to making any major decisions. This inevitably lengthens the timeframe within which decisions can be made:

"But, everything...with community development, is a very slow process. So therefore...things don't happen overnight. Now, that was the thing that we found difficult in the beginning, when we were trying to set up the stuff around the County Development Board and all that and...the strategic plan. Because they would be saying 'Oh, we need to have such and such and such by next week, the fifteenth or whatever' and we'd say 'Well, that's not possible because we have a Platform. There's three or four people who represent the Platform. We've to go back to the steering group. We've to sit around the table and discuss it. They've got to go back then to their groups'. So, you're talking, if FÁS or a statutory agency can make deadlines and say 'Oh, we're sticking to this deadline', in community development you can't make deadlines like that...you've got to do the consultation process back. So, that's the difference...if you're a planner in South Dublin County Council...you make plans and they'd sit around the table and meet. Well, they might have one consultation process but...you don't have people all rushing back from that consultation process saying 'You can't do this, you can't do that!' because it wouldn't work..."

“...It’s just they [local authority officials] are not familiar with the way we work...statutory agencies work in a different way than the community sector. So, it’s learning the different ways of working and trying to find a common denominator. Because...as I said, community development is a slow process and you’re constantly going back to the people and making sure that the people on the ground know what’s happening...You get your directions from on high and you do them, I think, in statutory agencies...So I suppose, they have a difficulty as well, trying to change...to working the same as ourselves” (Tallaght IAP Monitoring Committee Member B).

5.7. THE REGENERATION OF BALLYMUN: THE BOARD OF BALLYMUN REGENERATION LTD.

The Ballymun Regeneration Master Plan

The 'Masterplan for the New Ballymun'

The Ballymun Regeneration project has been described as “the largest urban renewal scheme ever undertaken in Ireland, and the largest of its kind in Europe” (Irish Times, 2004). “Highly innovative in the Irish context,” the Ballymun Regeneration Masterplan is being implemented under “the auspices of a quasi governmental, designated agency called Ballymun Regeneration Ltd (BRL) the only designated, quasi governmental agency which has been employed to regenerate a public housing area in the history of the State” (Norris, 2001: 3).¹⁰

BRL, which is wholly owned by Dublin City Council, was established in 1997 to prepare and implement a master plan for the regeneration of Ballymun (Norris, 2001: 10). The ensuing *Masterplan for the New Ballymun* was published in 1998 as “a framework document which proposes an integrated strategy for the social, economic and physical renewal of the area” (BRL, 1998: i).

The formulation of the 'Ballymun Integrated Area Plan'

BRL outlined the significance of its regeneration plan in the following manner. “The Masterplan establishes some broad, strategic principles which have to be generally agreed in order to submit the Integrated Area Plan to the DoE by March 31 1998” (BRL, 1998: 2). In addition to the building of new homes, which BRL described as “the relatively easy and predictable part of the regeneration project,” it identified the management of “real economic and social improvements for the community... [as] much harder and often not within the direct control of the regeneration agency” (ibid). While direct government investment would be utilised in the construction of the area’s new public housing stock, it was envisaged that these other and more difficult aspects of the area’s regeneration would be delivered by private sector investment promoted through the use of tax incentives. To that end, BRL outlined its hopes of attracting “appropriate employment, retail, leisure and community development investments from the private sector... by the use of particular tax incentives and the availability of good sites” (BRL, 1998: 2).

“If the opportunities presented by the Regeneration Project... [were] to be grasped,” BRL argued that “Ballymun’s unique position must be recognised in the next round of the Urban Renewal Scheme by making it a special case for innovative incentives linked to solving social needs” (BRL, 1998: i). Following its submission to government with an application for tax incentives for the area, the Ballymun Integrated Area Plan (IAP) was one of forty-nine IAPs subsequently recommended for designation by the Department of the Environment and Local Government’s Expert Advisory Panel under the 1998 Urban Renewal Scheme (Department of Finance, 2006: 3-4). The marriage of the Masterplan and the Integrated Area Plan established “a five pronged strategy for the regeneration of the area” categorised under five broad programme headings (i) Housing; (ii) Employment; (iii) Education and Training; (iv) Neighbourhood Identity; (v) Town Centre (Norris, 2001: 14-16).¹¹

Community participation within the structures of BRL

In a master plan credited with having been “developed in close consultation and in partnership with people in Ballymun,” BRL noted the wide range of interests that enjoyed ‘an input’ into the plan – “the local community groups, local and adjoining residents, business and sectoral interests, statutory bodies, the Ballymun Housing Task Force, the Estate Forums and a local based community design group” (BRL, 1998: ii). If the challenge for BRL

¹⁰ The innovative nature of the regeneration of Ballymun was also located in the ‘unprecedented’ use of tax incentives “to encourage private-sector investment in an area of this type” (Norris, 2001: 3-4).

¹¹ See Norris, 2001: 16: “Table 1. Main Points of the Ballymun Regeneration Strategy” as adapted from BRL, 1998: vi.

at the outset lay in engaging “a very sceptical community” the challenge now lay in “harness[ing] this new found community confidence in the project and help[ing] Ballymun achieve its potential” (ibid).

The elaborate structures established to engage and harness community confidence and to facilitate ongoing community participation have been described as “the second pillar of the organisational structure of Ballymun Regeneration Ltd.” (Norris, 2001: 10). They included the appointment of the then Ballymun Housing Task Force as the official liaison group between residents and BRL (a liaison function which the Task Force carried out through the mechanism of the five area forums in Ballymun) and “a range of other mechanisms for consultation with the general population of the estate” (Norris, 2001: 10-13). Significantly, the responsibility for establishing this latter range of consultative mechanisms (encompassing both occasional and ongoing consultative measures) was vested in a regeneration consultancy firm.

While BRL’s “comprehensive and multi-dimensional procedures for involving residents in the development of the regeneration plan” have been described as constituting “a model of good practice in the Irish context” (Norris, 2001: 20) a number of significant criticisms have also been documented in respect of those same consultative procedures and structures (as cited in Norris, 2001: 20-21).

Those criticisms relate among other things to the imposition of “a new and gigantic task on the [Area] Forums who were already ill-equipped and unprepared to cope with the challenge in hand;” the presentation of the Draft Master Plan to the community in a manner “not designed to investigate alternatives but simply to enlist support for an already determined proposal;” the absence of any “structures or resources for accountability” for those representing the community’s interests on the BRL Board and IAP Monitoring Committee outside of those groups from which individual representatives had been drawn in the first instance; “a lack of clarity... and severe under-resourcing” about the role and work of the five area forums: the absence of resources necessary to engage with “the complexity of issues involved in the regeneration process;” the manner in which existing community-based organisations in Ballymun had “largely been bypassed in the structures set up by BRL” and the manner in which the membership of those same structures had been determined by BRL (Ballymun Community Action Programme, 2000: 32-35).

As is evident from the contrasting assessments which have been offered of BRL’s consultative strategy, the experience and perspective of the wider community within the broader organisational structures instituted by BRL obviously warrant greater attention in its own right. Such experiences, perspectives and analyses are not, however, within the remit of this case study which is specifically concerned with the experience and perspective of those individuals invited to represent their community’s interests within this “highly innovative... designated, quasi governmental agency” on the Board of BRL (Norris, 2001: 3).

Community representation within the BRL Board of Directors

The first pillar of BRL’s organisational structure consists of a voluntary board of directors who manage the company; a small staff group who are responsible for the organisation’s administration and a team of consultants appointed by BRL (Norris, 2001: 10-11). BRL’s board of directors comprises representatives of a wide range of statutory, community and private sector organisations. While the current composition of the board of BRL – an independent chairperson; the managing director and company secretary of BRL; two local city councillors; the chief executive of Ballymun Partnership; two community representatives; Dublin City Council’s Assistant City Manager (Housing and Residential Services Department) and Head of Finance; representatives from the Health Service Executive, Dublin City University and Friends First¹² - appears to be broadly similar to that at the time of the Master Plan’s publication, it has significantly altered in one respect. The community of Ballymun are now represented by two as opposed to four community representatives.

¹² Information provided by BRL 20th October 2006.

The perspectives upon which this case study is based

This case study is structured around the experience and perspective of BRL's senior planner and those two community representatives remaining within the Board of BRL. The community representatives in question represent the Ballymun Neighbourhood Council (BNC) and the Ballymun Women's Resource Centre (WRC) respectively. While this case study is aware that the community are also participating to varying degrees within broader consultative structures and procedures established by BRL, it confines itself in this instance to the community's experience of participating in planning within the confines of the Board of BRL. As in the case of all forums incorporating formally designated community representatives, it is conscious that such representation may not represent the range and diversity of positions, opinions, support and opposition to be found within the larger population of the designated plan area.

Awareness and experience of planning prior to engaging with BRL

Community involvement in planning & regeneration issues prior to BRL.

The genesis of one of the community organisations represented on the Board of BRL, the Women's Resource Centre (WRC), follows from the very specific demography obtaining in Ballymun.

"Ballymun's a very women's town. It has the highest number per capita of lone parents in Europe because of the allocations policies of successive Councils. For example, there was the £5,000 grant to surrender your flat, which was an attempt to kick-start the building industry. Anyone with a job left and was replaced by an unemployed person, perhaps a lone parent. Ballymun was left at the bottom of the pile by the responses to every crisis in Dublin City. It's a highly social welfare dependent community. In response to it, local women set-up the Women's Resource Centre." (Community Representative A)

Of the many services and educational programmes subsequently established, one in particular brought the WRC's participants into contact with urban planning.

"We developed the NOW Programme, New Opportunities for Women, with the National College of Ireland. It covered the rudiments of architecture and urban planning and also social policies, understanding why decisions are made, developing the skills to negotiate. Women involved in the redevelopment were challenging the architects, to avoid repeating the mistakes of past. The architects weren't very happy about that. They're not used to it. The women knew some of the terms and were able to challenge the architects. So, the group was quite useful but it was paid for by the EU so it was never mainstreamed in Ireland." (Community Representative A)

Notwithstanding the failure of either the EU or the Irish government to mainstream this educational initiative, the WRC's engagement with urban planning was also to be informed by an earlier exposure to the writings of women planners that predated both the NOW programme and the preparation of the BRL Masterplan. Such an early engagement with planning issues left the WRC with a strong sense of ownership over the ensuing regeneration plans.

"We like to think that we were involved from the beginning. In 1997, before the NOW Programme was set-up, there had been no decision to do anything about Ballymun. A group of women planners got together and wrote a report, Women in Planning, through the planners' association. I got my hands on it through friends in SIPTU. It had interesting things to do [say], around planning and design..."

"...We held a seminar for International Women's Day and 107 local women participated in this. There was no thinking of demolition at that time and just a small part of Ballymun had been refurbished. We wanted women's views on what should be done. At the seminar, we asked [named individual, TD], who is an architect and was Minister for Housing at that time "Why did you do that? Why did you build towers instead of houses?" and her answer was "Because we could! We learned how to build high-rise in the sixties". She went back to

Cabinet with 107 women roaring at her and I think she really wanted to help. So, we believe we had something to do with it." (Community Representative A)

Like the WRC, the other community organisation accorded representation on the BRL Board, the Ballymun Neighbourhood Council (BNC) has been involved in the regeneration of the Ballymun from the outset. While originally from the area, the community representative in question is no longer resident in Ballymun.

I was there from the very start or pre - I've been involved in Ballymun for about twenty years. Longer! So, I was involved in a lot of the initiatives there, like the Jobs Centre, the Community Coalition, the Area Task Force, before its existing format. So! I mean, I was a director. I'm a director of BRL since the outset, from the community side. I'm chairperson of the BNC, which was the [Housing] Task Force before, it's now the Ballymun Neighbourhood Council." (Community Representative B)

BNC traces its lineage through a series of community groups, organisations and forums. In its prior incarnation, the Ballymun Housing Task Force

"was one of the initiatives of the Ballymun Community Coalition, which was an area forum, where community groups and organisations came together, to look at sort of issues affecting Ballymun. So, it was sort of like an area where you left your guns outside, you know, as community organisations and you worked for the common good. I suppose, the three probably key things it initiated, one was the Job Centre, the other was the Credit Union and the third one was the Task Force. Each meeting different needs, the Job Centre for unemployment and job creation, the Credit Union for local finance and support and then the Task Force for regeneration within the area, you know." (Community Representative B)

He also charts the community's involvement in the various stages of the campaign for 'a new Ballymun' as it moved from a refurbishment to a regeneration agenda.

"Well, there was a lot of campaigning in Ballymun for the regeneration - Well first of all, it was for refurbishment of the area. And then, I suppose, after certain sort of studies and reviews were undertaken, it became clear that refurbishment wasn't really an option, it was regeneration. And, I suppose, the Task Force was heavily involved... it was very active in sort of lobbying for a new Ballymun." (Community Representative B)

While the involvement of the BNC in planning thereafter appears to have been confined to its engagement with the overall regeneration process, the WRC does make reference to an involvement in both lodging objections and assisting others in taking judicial reviews of planning decisions.

BRL's commitment to community participation in the planning system

A commitment initially marred by a gender bias?

BRL's commitment to community participation in the planning and regeneration process was tested in the first instance by the gender bias evident in the representation accorded to local community organisations at the outset. In an area understood to be very much 'a women's town,' the WRC was determined to secure female representation on the exclusively male board of BRL.

"So, on the board of BRL, you had the city architect, the city engineer and so on. Eleven men! So, naturally enough, the Women's Resource Centre went ballistic. We rang the Department, we rang [named individual, RTE Radio presenter], she's done three or four programmes on here. We rang the Council. We went mad and rang everyone. So, in the end they said they would have two local representatives." (Community Representative A)

BRL's commitment to community participation

BRL's commitment to community consultation is explained with reference to the transformation that the Master Plan will effect on the community and environment of Ballymun. The delineation of BRL's responsibility in this area was accompanied by a rare *de facto* official admission that the displacement of existing communities is the normal outcome of such regeneration programmes.

"Consultation is hugely labour intensive if it's going to have any validity and if it's going to be claimed to have any validity. There is a statutory process within the planning system and maybe that's as good, after years in operation. But, as a public body, we do have a responsibility to work closely with the people whose whole environment is being totally transformed, which has arisen out of the unusual commitment of the Irish Government's decision to keep the Ballymun community in place. That's unusual in other parts of the city... That commitment is hugely important but also hugely disruptive." (BRL Senior Planner)

Continuing work with local people was cited as evidence of BRL's commitment to community consultation.

"The Masterplan was associated with an extensive consultation process and we used a considerable number of different techniques. But, the implementation of the masterplan needs more and more consultation processes. It ranges from working very intensively with people moving house - and it also entails working with local groups."

"...Our most valuable experiences of consultation are those in which there is one-to-one involvement with people who are either moving or who are living beside someone who's moving. Sometimes it's successful, sometimes not. They can be resentful. Then there are participatory programmes around environment, community development, personal development, thinking about living together as a community on the ground, environmental involvement, for example, 'What am I going to do with this garden that I said I wanted but haven't a clue about?' BRL and the community are working with the Guards [Gardai] on the Safer Ballymun Initiative. Under the social sustainable programme, there's sports, environment, education initiatives. But, we're not primarily an education body so we work with schools and build partnerships." (BRL Senior Planner)

The type of participation accorded the community

Of the inventory of measures taken to facilitate community participation - questionnaires, public meetings, exhibitions, 'planning for real' exercises, focus groups, community fora etc. – BRL judged consultation with smaller groups and participatory programmes to have been the most effective.

"Public meetings tend to be grand-standing events, where people shout and yell. Politicians like them. Smaller groups, focused on a particular issue you have to address are more useful... Then participatory programmes, coming together through experiential learning. How we're going to live our lives and build a more effective community, which is a much more high level objective. A wide range of techniques were used but those where people participate in building community. [Named individual, academic] came to a workshop with forty practitioners and community activists. She heard it, warts and all. But, I said to her 'How can you do it better?' and she said we were doing all the right things. For instance, some of the residents were complaining that there's a playground there and it's a bit sterile. She turned to them and said 'What are you going to do about that?' With participatory programmes, people take responsibility for themselves. It's the people on the ground who will make it a better place." (BRL Senior Planner)

While any suggestion that some groups might have been excluded from the consultation process was met with a stout refusal, it is apparent that the role and authority of communities within BRL's consultative procedures have been clearly delimited – as have the parameters of the consultation agenda.

"If you talk to some groups, you may be told that they were never talked to. Yet the five local plans were based on consultation, using numerous techniques and fora. And yet, if people decide they don't like what they're hearing, they will say 'We weren't talked to'. That is a continuing issue. One of the issues is that you have to - If it's going to be a tram, you don't go to a meeting, open a book and say 'What will we do about transportation?' You say 'It's going to be a tram. What are the pros and cons of having it going that way or that way or that way?' Communities don't have the final say. The politics of veto are just not on. Also, we don't pay people off." (BRL Senior Planner)

Community representatives have also recognised the constraints that BRL's largely public sector mindset imposes on the consultative and participate process.

"To give BRL its due, they do try to encourage community participation. But, they come from the public sector and they have a different background so their view of participation is somewhat different to mine. They come from a quango State. I was a civil servant myself! ...They have tried very hard but within limits and they're public sector limits. The Corporation has no problem with consulting and keeping the streets clean in Rathmines. They have recognised there's horses for courses. They've recognised it and tried to combat it but within limits. We have to recognise that. It's a transition, a work in progress. A transition from a public sector that never believed in consulting for a very long time." (Community Representative A)

The community representatives' assessment of BRL's commitment

While no official party appears to have sought the community's views on whether to pursue the refurbishment or regeneration option in Ballymun, it is interesting to note that such an omission does not appear to have attracted any criticism.

"No. But, it's so unsuitable for refurbishment. They just announced that they would demolish it all. At the same time, the Minister announced that he was going to set-up a separate company for Ballymun, not a department of Dublin City Council." (Community Representative A)

An inventory of the steps taken by BRL to facilitate community participation in the preparation of the Master Plan was instead advanced as evidence of BRL's commitment.

"There was a process that they went through to design the masterplan. It was more or less designed by the time I got onto the board. But, I was also over here so I took part in a lot of consultation meetings around youth services, childcare and housing design. There were focus group meetings around the community on different issues. Then there were general public participation meetings, asking "What is it you want?" They designed the masterplan after all these meetings. But, it hasn't been revisited since and that was 1998." (Community Representative A)

In expressing concern about BRL's failure to review the Master Plan in the years since its publication, community representatives and BRL appeared to have different understandings of the plan's standing - as was evident in the unsolicited defence which BRL offers of allegations that it has constantly changed the plan.

"There's been huge criticism that we change it every five minutes, which is not true. But, we do have to be flexible. We aimed for the community to inform the masterplan and all techniques, all information gathered was analysed for final input into masterplan. But, there's also a huge need for on-going consultation. For example, the neighbourhoods failed to develop post-masterplan." (BRL Senior Planner)

BNC empathised with the scale of the overall task facing BRL and expressed a reasonable degree of satisfaction with its management of the community participation element of its brief.

"I think BRL has a very, very, very difficult job, you know. It's trying to get a huge project of regeneration accomplished and engage in community consultation. I think they do some of it well and some of it not so well. But, no better, no worse than anybody else in a similar situation would be, you know. (Community Representative B)

An acceptance of the need to temper a commitment to community participation with pragmatic considerations was clear.

"So, for an organisation like BRL, they have to try and engage in a community consultation of various different natures but at the same time to have to try and push through a project. And sometimes pushing through a project then is interpreted as not listening to the community or at odds with the community and neither are necessarily true, you know." (Community Representative B)

The same community representative later conceded that BRL might have adopted a more proactive stance in engaging community organisations and that its importing of English consultants may have been ill judged.

"I mean, BRL did draft the masterplan back in '96/'97, there was wide community consultation on that. I think they could have engaged more community organisations at that stage, in that consultation process. Rather than bringing in people from England, which I think was not necessarily the best idea. But, there was wide consultation, there was models and there was forums and there was events. They do bring out regular news bulletins, I think it goes into every home, you know. There is contact numbers. But again...which organisations... Like, if you need to be informed, you know what I mean, you can get the information. If you're expecting it to be passively forwarded to you on all occasions, well that's probably a difficulty, you know. (Community Representative B)

Any criticism of BRL for bypassing Ballymun's more established community organisations was, however, again tempered by an acknowledgement of the exigencies attaching to BRL's task.

"I just think, yeah, there possibly could have been some better engagements with some of the more established community organisations, where there was I think this tendency to distance from them. That then gave them the sense that in some ways, that BRL knew best in some situations. Nobody has all the knowledge and all the expertise and more is achieved through co-operation and collaboration. So! But again, in fairness to BRL, like with individuals, you know, community organisations also have their interests and needs and priorities that they have to fulfil. And they have to try and push through a project, you know. I think, in the context of things, yes, there's definite room for improvement. But, I don't think there's any organisation that can say there isn't that. I think, on the positive side for BRL, is that they have achieved a tremendous amount of work, in a relatively short period of time, under very difficult circumstances where the population is still there, you know. And that's to be commended. (Community Representative B)

While community representatives were generally very complementary in their assessment of BRL's commitment to community participation, it was possible to discern an underlying anxiety about the ends to which Dublin City Council sought to encourage community participation. This point was made with reference to the manner in which Dublin City Council had engaged its tenants in estate-management procedures. The very casual disrespect evident in the attitude of local-authority officials towards tenants was also noted.

"One of our ideas - and Dublin City Council took it over, not BRL - was to put staff into estate offices. We got the local Neighbourhood Forum sitting on allocation committees, saying who couldn't move in and cleaning up the area. But, people are worn out. They ended up being committees to do the Corporation's dirty work. You have to be very careful what you say and how you say it. "That's the landlord's job. You're paying your rent for the landlord to do it". But then one official said "You hardly pay an economic rent". But, rent is subsidised, the same as

mortgage subsidy. The only people who are not subsidised are cash buyers. It's that attitude of "You're getting a subsidised house so you deserve less". We should have complained about that guy... We were trying to meet with the Corporation and that was the attitude." (Community Representative A)

The calibre and clarity of the information imparted to the community

BRL's efforts to provide the community with clear and accessible plans were judged by one community representative to have been reasonably successful.

"I think that they have tried, that they have improved over the years on that, you know. I think that reading plans is difficult for anybody. But, when they came to the different phases of the housing and they were talking to people about what houses they might get or their options, I think they were very descriptive. They had models, they showed people things. So! Maybe there's more that could be done, I don't know, maybe using more technology, in terms of 3-D. But, I think they made a fair effort, you know. I think a reasonably fair effort has been made.... My own sense is that they've tried their best. Whether they succeeded in all cases or all situations, that's a matter, you know, of opinion, maybe." (Community Representative B)

BRL's efforts to impart a spatial conception of its housing plans were noted by another community representative.

"You do need special input, like models and so on and they do provide that. With spatial conception being a form of intelligence, you either have it or you don't. They would recognise that and have done a number of things. They've even built models of the houses, where you can take each bedroom out." (Community Representative A)

But so too was its failure to ensure that community groups across the area were kept informed of plans and proposals for the area.

'No! Not unless you're in certain circles. I do think BRL have a problem with their communications and they recognise that. But, they don't recognise the potential of IT. They could have put us on a virtual network that every day we could log onto. It would have been experimental money. But, 'Are we allowed?' They could have put in broadband for €10 a year; if everyone had it for the community and local residents and anyone who wants to use it... We could have been the first community with a virtual private network. They do produce newsletters and models, a whole variety of things like that but you have to know where to go. So, they could have had virtual tours." (Community Representative A)

Community access to planners and other officials

The community's assessment of its access to planners and other officials

Community representatives were in agreement about the generally good access that they enjoy to BRL's planners and officials. One community representative attributed such access to the calibre and commitment of BRL's personnel.

"Yeah. I think yeah for the most part, yeah. I mean, if I asked for information or if I asked to talk to somebody, they are made available, you know. Maybe I don't use it sufficiently but, yeah, I've never felt that - I mean, I can ring [named individual, Managing Director, BRL] on the phone today and talk to him...or he'll ring me back... Yeah, I mean, like every organisation has its own personalities. Sometimes you might sort of say that some of the personalities mightn't be the best personalities for the job but you can't legislate for - But, there's some very genuine people in BRL, I think a lot of dedication and commitment. In fairness to [named individual, Managing Director, BRL], I think he's created a sense of vision. I mightn't agree with all his vision, I might think there's a better way to do some of it or I might do some of it differently but that's again down to individuals. But, he has shown vision and commitment and dedication and he's generated that in a very loyal staff and that's to be commended. In fairness, they're not nine-to-five people, you know. They are secondees from Dublin City Council, they don't get overtime, you know, yet they put in the effort, you know. So, you know, that has to be applauded, you know." (Community Representative B)

For the other community representative, access to planning professionals had been secured through feminist networks. She questioned, however, if the WRC would have enjoyed the same degree of access to planning professionals in the event that the female planners in question were to be replaced.

"We do. [Named individual, BRL Senior Planner] was the main architect of Women in Planning, with [named individual] and [named individual]. They did a seminar with us. We rang Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown and asked for a lend of the women for the day. Then, [named individual, BRL Officer] elected to come to Ballymun because it's the type of project she would want to be associated with, for all the right reasons. I've no problem getting access to them. I have their home numbers. Whether I was on the board or not, I'd have [named individual, BRL Officer]. We're old-fashioned feminists from the seventies. If they were replaced next month, would I have the same access?" (Community Representative A)

While BRL had never offered to assist in the purchase of independent technical advice or expertise, community representatives appeared to accept the advice of BRL's planners as independent. One of the community representatives' organisations had previously come into contact with a community organisation providing independent technical aid but had rejected its 'namby-pamby' services in favour of the practical assistance of a local technical drawing teacher.

"When we were designing the NOW Programme, we did meet with them [the community organisation providing independent technical aid] and talk with them. But, we didn't use their stuff because we thought it was a bit namby-pamby. We wanted something a bit more hard-hitting. A local technical drawing teacher turned out to be fabulous. He did great things. He brought them out to see the Casino in Marino. And he did a whole spatial thing with them. He got them to make a model of a room in their new house and they really got a, kind of, understanding of what they were doing." (Community Representative A)

The credence given to the community's planning concerns

BRL's stated position on the value of community views

BRL's senior planner outlined the aims of BRL's public participation measures in the following manner.

"To hear all voices. To hear the genuine concerns, hopes and aspirations of the community and then incorporate them into our plans and proposals, as they filter down." (BRL Senior Planner)

This position was, however, significantly qualified by a later statement questioning the value of public participation.

"Public participation is worthwhile but a bit overstated. Sometimes, the analysis in academic circles is that all wisdom comes from the community. That's not true because there is a role for experts as well. If you were to develop as the community wanted - For example, in Fatima Mansions, the residents wanted to live in bungalows and have a gym. But, the gym won't exist if you have bungalows because the existing population has no money. There's a huge lack of understanding of densities. And a perception that society owes people endless buildings to do what you want with." (BRL Senior Planner)

The community's assessment of the credence afforded its views

Community representatives meanwhile understood their role on the Board of BRL as a tokenistic rubber-stamping exercise, rather than its comprising a decision-making function.

"We rubber-stamp lots of very technical things. So much of the decisions have already been made that our ability to influence or to change anything is very limited. But, since the new chair

took over, I feel a lot more listened to. Where our influence can be felt is in the emphasis placed on particular things". (Community Representative A).

Community representatives had, for example, been very vocal on the importance of achieving a social mix.

"For example, a lot of houses are being built or are ready to go so the housing part is sorted. But, what we keep harking back to is that it's very easy to build and then walk away. But, unless you get a social mix and diversity of tenure, what have you changed? Nothing! I firmly believe that that's my job there. [Asking questions like] 'What are you doing to make sure there's private sales?' Private renters and buyers will live here and buy in the shopping centre. You have to have diversity. Where's Dublin's Chinese Quarter, where's its Latin Quarter? There needs to be a whole variety. One of our biggest universities is just down the street, DCU. People never see the students! In university towns, like Coleraine and Stirling, students are as integrated as anyone else. There's a whole village down there and they don't come up past Ballymun Avenue because there's nothing here to come up for... We need to try and make Ballymun normal. Ballymun should be called a university town." (Community Representative A).

In engaging in the planning system, community representatives were very conscious of the denial of standing to those not in a position to recompense the professional architect or planner. The assertion of entitlements in the area of planning had brought community members into conflict with a public authority unwilling to concede any such entitlement on the part of public housing tenants.

"We've got involved in them all [planning issues] at some stage or other. Underpinning them all is two principles. One is life-long living. That the community needs to sustain its residents from the cradle to the grave. Planning has to have flexibility around the infrastructure that's already there, from childcare to elderly care. The second principle is that you have to get away from the client being the one who pays the architect. The client is the one who has to use the space. Architects will design, planners will plan and he who pays the piper calls the tune. This leads to major problems. But, the architects resented the women being able to say 'You can't put the staircase there. How will we get a double bed up? Do you think we're all single mothers?' BRL has sent the architects back to meet the people who'll be living there but the design is done! And the brief is done, how many two-beds, three-beds and so on. They go off and do their designs and then come back instead of saying 'What do you think?' in the first instance: 'Would you like courtyard style?' 'Back or front parking?' 'What style would you like to live in?' And explaining it to people: 'This is the way the Germans prefer to live'." (Community Representative A)

The above views were accompanied by a general perception of professional contempt for the non-professional and the non-college educated. For such a professional class, communities become an unwelcome consequence as opposed to a client. This point is not, of course, made of all planners or architects.

"To make a general, sweeping statement - In general, there's a certain arrogance to technical people of any sort. Whether it's the local doctor, local solicitor or engineer, it's 'What would you know? I've studied this at college.' ...Some [architects and planners] have been very community-friendly, like [named individual] and the garden architect, [named individual]. Some are very community-friendly architects and some not so friendly. You are a consequence they do not want to deal with. The BRL architect was very good. In fact, the best design was by the BRL architect." (Community Representative A)

Arising difficulties and tensions

A different community point of view recognised tensions arising between professional architects and planners and the community to be inevitable and of no major consequence.

"I think there's always going to be a tension there, you know. Planners and architects are writing a dream or drafting a dream or a vision that they have in their minds. So, like everybody when you're criticised, you know, I suppose you go partly into sort of a defence mode. But, I think that they have listened as well. They've won some battles, they've lost some battles." (Community Representative B)

It was suggested that the community may also bear responsibility for those occasions on which their views have not been given credence. This point was made with particular reference to the community's tendency to splinter and fragment.

"Whether the community, and I include the BNC, is as organised and as effective around some of these issues, I think is debatable. And that's down to the community, do you know what I mean, and its capacity to pull together. So, we can't blame BRL for our sometimes deficiencies or disorganisation, you know, or our inability to have a collective vision to put forward. And that splintering at times, I think, does do the community a disadvantage. Because in the end BRL, like any other entity, is going to say "Well, what do you want? You're saying this, you're saying that. We have to move forward". (Community Representative B)

It was those 'outside the process' who were understood to be the agents of such splintering. The attention which these people focused on the planning process and health and safety issues was understood to be detrimental to the consensus established by those within.

"And you get general agreement one day and then people are splintered the next day. And people outside the process are trying to, you know, question the planning permission or, you know, trying to bring a health and safety issue against the site or - you know. Whereas what if there was, sort of, general agreement, do you know what I mean? That type of thing... Or where, you know, there was agreement that something would happen and then somebody would be outside lobbying the opposite, you know. And, I mean, sometimes even the politicians do that, you know. I mean, there's a general agreement within the BNC to do something because it's seen to be in the common good but then local residents get on to their local representative or the TDs and there's a different message being aired outside, you know." (Community Representative B)

The lesser role accorded to the community and its views

While there appeared to be agreement on the lesser role accorded to community representatives within the Board of BRL, individual community representatives expresses differing levels of satisfaction with the situation. For one community representative, there was a refusal to criticise BRL for retaining the significant power within the executive body.

"I think you'll get a lot of people will accuse BRL and others of that, you know. What's realistic is we're not an executive board, you know. There's an executive there. They no doubt prepare the material that we read and they interpret the decisions that are made out of that. So, you know, it's not black and white. I think, you know, in the end, if there's a pushing of ideas or achievement of, sort of, aspirations, it's probably a seventy-thirty for the executive. But, that's not manipulation. That's because they're full-time officials and that's their job. Do you know what I mean? And we'll only pick up on certain things that we feel are burning issues, which - you know. We don't have the knowledge that the executive have. So, it's a difficult - I mean, the easy one to sort of say is 'Yeah, they just push through their own agenda'. And I think the vast majority of community groups in Ballymun will possibly accuse them of that at some stage or other, whether they feel they're on their side or not on their side. But, I think that's too simplistic, you know." (Community Representative B)

While denying that BRL had ever 'hoodwinked' the community, the same community representative applauded BRL for exploiting the splintered nature of the community's representation.

"I don't genuinely feel that there's been a case or a situation, where BRL have hoodwinked the community, you know. I think that they've pushed things at times, pushed through things

and sometimes got between the splinters I mentioned earlier. But, that's good organisation, you know. If you can't get a common push against you, well then you can - you know. We'd all do that. Any organisation would do that that had a vision." (Community Representative B, 9)

Others were not as complacent about the lesser role afforded the community and suggested that the community's views would not be given due credence or recognition until its standing was underwritten by legal provision.

"The community and the community sector has a commodity to sell. Until that's given a currency, we'll not be given a place at the table. Planners and architects design and the Corporation provides the money to build but the fabric of what will soon be in there is what the community has to offer. But, it will not be seen as a valuable commodity until it's written as the law that there has to be consultation." (Community Representative A)

BRL's rejoinder to criticisms advanced of its consultation process

BRL acknowledged that criticisms had been advanced of its consultation process. They did not, however, concede the legitimacy of any such criticisms which were understood to derive instead from misguided demands on the part of certain groups in the community.

"There has been a huge investment in talking to people about what they needed. And yet some people say we didn't consult when we did. BRL has a hugely bad reputation with older adults. We're in consultation with local people to overcome barriers to sports and recreation with effective programmes, not buildings all over the place. For instance, there's an older adults group in Ballymun, which is amazingly effective. They're very much running themselves, that's the nature of social capital. They have members not only from Ballymun but from the surrounding suburbs as well. But, they go to meetings and say 'We want a building'. 'There isn't money to give you a building on your own...' 'Get onto the management board of the local-authority run facility' and then they will be able to keep their energies for running programmes." (BRL Senior Planner)

BRL remained confident that it had met its aims in relation to public participation.

"At the end of the day, BRL is a public authority. It makes big decisions and they won't please everybody all of the time. There's no better organisation for consulting the public." (BRL Senior Planner)

Barriers and obstacles to effective community participation in planning

Barriers for which the community bears responsibility

While not elaborated upon in any detail, BRL readily agreed that very many barriers present difficulties in facilitating public participation in the planning system – unrealistic expectations and demands, NIMBY-ism, anti-development attitudes and conflicting community interests. While BRL refused any suggestion that time constraints had caused difficulties in facilitating the process, it believed that the time invested in community consultation had led to losses for that same community - a community which had been overly concerned with process at the expense of outcome.

"...we would have lost out because we did so much consultation. The community view of the world is that the process is all-important and there is no product. The community lost out on things like tax incentives for neighbourhood centres because consultation was so slow. It's not so much an issue for me but it has prolonged the process." (BRL Senior Planner)

Community representatives also identified a number of impediments to community participation for which the community must bear responsibility – irrationality, fragmentation, arrogance.

"I mean, the problem about community consultation is... that's all very fine but not every community individual or organisation is rational, you know. Or they can be rational today and irrational tomorrow, you know. Community organisations don't necessarily have a sense of collective responsibility. They have particular needs and interests. So! And we see that within the BNC, you know. I mean, I wouldn't say that the BNC is the most effective community forum, in terms of community consultation, despite the fact that it has the five Area Forums. But, because people and individuals are just that, and particularly from a community perspective, it's very hard to get cohesiveness on all issues, you know."

"...I think sometimes community representatives and entities and organisations think that they have some sort of special right, you know. That because they're the community, they are either all-wise or all-knowing or, you know, whatever they perceive is the truth, you know what I mean. I think the reality is, in every organisation and every structure, it's about the effectiveness of the people representing, you know, their ability to articulate the issues, understand the issues. And any board, be it BRL, is only as good as the people around it. I think, within the community, representation on the board I think is actually quite strong. There is articulate people there, they can raise the issues, they can challenge. They don't have a collective view. I mean, I suppose that's probably the interesting thing. That they, when I think of it, they don't meet, you know, separately around issues. Now, whether they should or shouldn't! (Community Representative B)

In the light of the criticisms advanced of the community's failure to reach a collective position, it was interesting to note that community representatives had not themselves taken any steps to reach such a position in their official capacity as BRL Board members. While community politics are acknowledged to be an impediment to the consolidation of the community's position, there is also a certain amount of trepidation about the emergence of an organised critical community bloc.

"...there isn't that bloc as such, you know. Partly because I think, again, the community is being represented by organisations. Who again, you know, while no doubt all have the common good at heart... there is dynamics, politics between organisations as well, you know. And again, there may not be a shared view on certain issues. But, I do think maybe it would be useful, it could have been useful, if they came together once every, I don't know, three or six months, about how they see things going or, you know, their priorities. But, I suppose the other side of the thing is people are - on the board of BRL - are there in a voluntary capacity, you know. They have other responsibilities and - And I think on the other side, you can go too much to the other side, where the community bloc blocks everything." (Community Representative B)

Difficulties in securing the involvement of the wider community were attributed in part to the influx of public funding and professional anti-poverty workers – an influx which had deprived the community of its initiative, activism and dynamism.

"I think what's happened in Ballymun - I think Ballymun's been an area with huge voluntary involvement for years. I mean, when I was involved, I mean, at one stage I was in ninety-plus voluntary groups, you know. Two things have happened. One is that there's much more money going into Ballymun so there's more professionals. I'm not saying that in the most positive sense. But, there's more professionals working in the area, in the socio-economic field, on one side, who, it is their careers, who may or may not have a commitment to Ballymun. And then on the other side, with the boom in the economy, is that there's more and more people in Ballymun working. So, I think that the level of voluntary engagement is far less than it was ten years ago. And unfortunately, it's some of the same people, you know... chipping away at the same old stuff...."

"...I think, Ballymun has fantastic community spirit and all the rest but I think there needs to be an effort to rejuvenate that. We want new community leadership, young people with new vision and new ideas for the new Ballymun and there isn't necessarily an effective vehicle for that. And, as I say, there's more money in Ballymun. I feel there's more money in Ballymun than there ever was, with all the different organisations now. But, I'm not too sure whether there's more activity or more productivity, as a result of that. Because they spend more time, it seems to me, discussing who will not fund something or initiate something, as against who

will initiate something. So, it's an interesting scenario... Let's put it this way, there's very few new initiatives that have arisen since the money in the various different guises came into Ballymun. Whereas, things like the Jobs Centre, the Credit Union, the BNC, Women's Resource Centre and people like that, came into existence before there was any of that. (Community Representative B)

Barriers inhering in poor working class communities

- Informational barrier

In the absence of adequate information, community representatives described a knee-jerk oppositional reaction to individual developments from local communities.

"They usually have a fit at first. But, that's lack of information because the design is pretty good, it's a fairly high standard. But, when people don't know what's going on, they have a tend[ency] to have a fit at first. (Community Representative A)

The educational curriculum was blamed for the educational deficits manifest in the present adult generation – a deficit which could have been addressed through the incorporation of basic environmental concepts in the curriculum.

"One of our biggest mistakes is that architecture and planning were not put into the Junior and Leaving Certs. The environment is where we live! You have to have an understanding of why and how and question how we live. And understand the basic things that govern how we live! If we don't understand the principles, we can never fully participate." (Community Representative A)

- Resource and expertise barriers

The absence of technical and professional knowledge and expertise was identified as a significant barrier to community participation in the planning system.

"I suppose the obvious one is that you don't have architects, builders living in Ballymun, for the most part, you know, or planners. So, I mean, a knowledge and appreciation of the process. I mean... fundamental issues, like basic literacy and numeracy, are issues in areas like Ballymun. So, you don't have the middle class culture or the middle class range of expertise. So, that can be an inhibitor, to a certain extent. At the same time, you know, people in Ballymun are as wise and as cute! They may not be the most - you know, they may not wax lyrical about Shakespeare but they know what their issues are and they know when they need to articulate stuff, they can. So, yes, there's probably ways in which you can greater enable and empower groups and individuals and I think there's always scope to be more creative in that, you know. I'm sure if BRL sat down or anybody sat down to say 'Is there other ways we could do this or better ways to do this?' I sure you'd come up with ideas." (Community Representative B)

Such an acknowledgement on the part of one community representative did not, however, lead him to support demands for the provision of independent technical expertise for those same communities. On the contrary, it was feared that such independent expertise would provide a platform to those seeking to oppose and stall plans being progressed through BRL.

"There's been instances where there has been sort of an independent investigation taken on something. But, in general, it hasn't been funded. I think the problem with it is - it's a bit like they say when you set up a HR department in an organisation, for the first six months of the year you end up having huge HR problems because people now have a vehicle by which to vent whatever. And I think the problem - I think there's a slight problem around it is that everybody, the world and its mother, will want to have an independent review of everything. I'm not saying that's right or wrong. So, there hasn't been a ready fund made available. That's not to say that there shouldn't be some mechanism for maybe independent assessment, you know. But, how do you legislate for that? I think it's difficult, in a way, that every raving lunatic - Like, Ballymun is like everywhere else, there's very genuine and able and capable people. But, there's been people who don't want the flats to come down for the most erroneous

reasons, you know, and if you give them the vehicle by which to independently assess everything, we'll all be in our graves and looking back. (Community Representative B)

There was no such trepidation on the part of the other community representative who immediately seized upon the significance of the resource barrier and the case for the *pro bono* provision of architectural, planning and engineering expertise to communities in areas like Ballymun.

"Resources for community groups. All community groups' funding is programme-based. So, you get funding to do a particular job and you're doubling up somebody's job to do it. You can't ever have anyone build-up enough resources, knowledge and skills to be able to participate equally and fully. There's no such thing as equality."

"...You need the ability to be able to interpret what's presented to you. That needs a lot of resources in a very complicated world. It's very complicated mediums that are being used to transmit information to people. Being able to read and computer literacy can be issues. Like, BRL's website is excellent but you have to be able to navigate the web to be able to do things, to answer questions like 'What's tenure diversity?' People in Foxrock have automatic access to an avenue of interfacing with officialdom, which people in Ballymun do not have. People in Foxrock are solicitors and so on. They have much more resources actually built into their community. Ballymun has to pay for those resources. The Women's Resources Centre doesn't have the money to fill that gap. We do have a Community Law Centre, which was an attempt to get that expertise already in other communities. But, it's stretched to its limits. It spends its time trying to get kids back for women, keeping them out of care, funding representatives for people in court. It's busy enough, without planning issues. There needs to be more pro bono work. Solicitors have been doing it for years but architects and planners and engineers should. Like, I wanted things done in my house for years and I was told 'You can't do that, it's a supporting wall'. So, I researched it and I went back and they said 'I know. I just didn't think you'd want it that way'. You need an engineer to say to you 'You can do that but it has to be done this way'. The engineer in Ballymun will say 'You can't do something because of the high tension power cables there'. We don't have the back-up to say 'Well, you can, if you do this'." (Community Representative A)

If the professional and technical expertise required to engage in the planning process was recognised as leaving working-class communities in a significantly disadvantaged position, the same difficulty was not thought to obtain in the case of the financial fees attaching to the submission of planning objections and the lodging of planning appeals.

"I don't know. I don't think the fee's that huge, is it?" (Community Representative B)

"You can raise it. There are always enough people who want to have a go. Or you can get onto the Green Party." (Community Representative A)

BRL, meanwhile, did not appear to concede any of the above barriers – educational, informational, professional, financial etc. – to be of any particular significance. The community's rejection of the advice offered by an independent planner on one occasion was cited in an apparent attempt to undermine, if not ridicule, the community's request for independent expertise. It would, it appears, be futile to provide independent advice to a community unprepared to take advice regardless of the quarter from which it had issued.

"Yes, all of those will be said. There's the classic example of no expertise. We were all experts and they didn't have any expertise in planning! In relation to one neighbourhood centre, they brought in [named individual, academic and TD]. I thought 'This is great' because I had absolute confidence in the proposal. We're not proposing development to annoy people; it's to aid the sustainability of the area. "This is great. Now they have an external expert". I had absolute confidence in the development and I thought he would agree with me and the community would decide it wasn't that bad. It included a pub and a health centre. They rejected their own expert's advice, even though the expert was independent." (BRL Senior Planner)

- Lack of confidence and alienation

While communities remain bereft of professional knowledge and expertise, those with professional qualifications presume to know best. The assumptions made by professionals (and planning correspondents) in relation to the planning needs and preferences of communities is understood to be hugely problematic.

"And it's hard work getting architects to recognise that they don't know it all. For example, [named individual, journalist] wrote a scurrilous article in The Irish Times, that people in Ballymun had no imagination and just wanted three-bed semis with front and back gardens. That's not people in Ballymun, that's architects with no imagination. That's architects! That's what they design... They should be designing for people's needs." (Community Representative A)

Those who seek to exhort local residents to assert themselves in the face of such professional arrogance face an uphill battle.

"From the very basic understanding and basic education you get from being a very small child, you get confidence and a sense of self. I'm not frightened of architects but a lot of people are, 'They'll think I'm thick'... You hear them saying 'They're very educated people'. I try to say 'They don't know more than you, just different things'. I say things like 'You shut up now and you listen!' to them and then they have to say it like it is. They're not used to people standing up to them." (Community Representative A)

Meanwhile, the received wisdom that poor working-class communities are characterised by an overwhelming apathy continues to obscure a closer reality of an alienated, isolated, economically vulnerable community.

"They're not apathetic but they are alienated, from a lack of understanding and a lack of confidence. They're not apathetic but they appear to be apathetic so the planners don't engage with them any more. But, it's actually alienation and isolation. All those things are barriers, resources, education, confidence, information." (Community Representative A)

Barriers external to the community of Ballymun

In addition to the many barriers inhering in the socio-economic character of Ballymun's population, community representatives also identified a number of barriers external to the community. Tensions between Dublin City Council and Ballymun Regeneration Ltd. were, for example, understood to have done a disservice to the regeneration project.

"I think that there's a huge tension there, yeah. BRL was set-up as a sub-entity of Dublin City Council. I suppose the idea... being one step removed, it would have more freedom. A lot of people were seconded from Dublin City Council into BRL. But, as I have observed it, I think there's been a huge tension between the two. In some ways, you know, having a dog and barking yourself sometimes... on one side. And on the other side sort of maybe BRL presents itself sometimes as a bit smug and - you know, in its independence, you know. But, whatever has happened between the two sides - not sides, the two agencies in it, which are really flip-sides of the same coin - I think there's been huge tension, friction. I think I'm alarmed at the level how large organisations are actually determined by personalities, as against strategic focus and behaviour. And I think that has done a disservice to the regeneration [project]." (Community Representative B)

This point was illustrated with reference to the very negative and competitive dynamic that has evolved between Dublin City Council and its wholly-owned but nominally independent regeneration company, BRL.¹³

¹³ It is important to note in this context that BRL does not have the power to grant planning permission and is accordingly obliged to submit all planning applications to Dublin City Council.

"I mean, at the moment, there's a whole thing going on at the moment within BRL. A number of the staff have been seconded back into Dublin City Council, you know. The memorandums and articles of BRL have been changed by the City Council recently and a number of people, including myself, are obliged to stand down next year. There was no necessarily consultation on that, you know. That's not to say that they didn't have a right to do it. I mean, you know, the members of the organisation have a right to decide. But, the manner in which that was done, I think, is somewhat questionable, you know... I think... there's a huge dynamic there going on. Huge competition between BRL and Dublin City Council, where a lot of energy is wasted. Where, in an instance where BRL could benefit from the goodwill of Dublin City Council, they may not have got it, you know. Or, you know, Dublin City Council may fundamentally not want something to happen and, you know ...I'm not saying BRL is the innocent party or Dublin City Council is the guilty party. I'm sort of saying there's an unhealthy dynamic there, which has arisen at a very senior level within both organisations. To the extent, for example, as a community organisation, you'd be wondering which side of the tent to stand in...So, whether it should have been done in-house from the start, I don't know, you know." (Community Representative B)

As that dynamic has grown increasingly unhealthy, it has impacted negatively on the community.

"It's been a dynamic there for a long period of time and more recently I think it's got more unhealthy. And, in terms of local governance, you'll see it's a dynamic that is not mitigated by the community but the community could actually become a victim of that dynamic." (Community Representative B)

In addition to the reported negative ramifications of such in-house wrangling, the community has also had to contend with the manipulations of other parties external to the community.

"We've also assisted people to take judicial reviews of decisions and taken part in objections. But, you do have to be very careful that you're not getting dragged into somebody else's little agenda, like the Friends of the Irish Environment. People have lots of different reasons for doing things and we can eventually find out that they've been less than honest. There was a whole load of objections going on, until we found out that one guy had a big involvement in a football club and was looking for an extra football pitch." (Community Representative A)

Proposals to overcome barriers

Having explored a number of the difficulties and barriers confronting the community of Ballymun in seeking to both engage in the planning process in particular and the regeneration process in general, one of the community representatives was moved to offer two proposals.

The community representative in question proposed that the community abjure the standard planning process as the appropriate arena for the resolution of planning differences. Those with planning difficulties or objections should instead first seek to effect resolution of all such concerns within the more consensual confines of those neighbourhood and partnership structures enjoying official recognition.

"But I mean, I suppose my view of that sort of stuff is, if there's issues like that arising, things like the BNC should be used more effectively. What drives me scatty is all the issues that are discussed and debated outside the BNC and never get on the table at the BNC and then we all come into the BNC and sort of criticise BRL or somebody else, without having used the mechanism that we put in place. So, I mean, if there was an issue that needed a review of planning permission or, you know, an incident, I would suggest that, in the first instance, you would bring that into the - through your Forum - into the BNC, ask the BNC or request or order or direct it to take an opinion on that and use that process, you know. And for me, again, it's a demonstration of the type of splintering that can go on. I mean, the BNC, for its strengths or weaknesses, is recognised by Government as the official liaison for the community, you know, so use it! It has the resources to do things like that, if it needed to be done." (Community Representative B)

Having admonished those with concerns to utilise available local channels for the resolution of all such concerns, the same community representative took issue with the effectiveness of those very community organisations. In an era in which local authorities have assumed an increasingly entrepreneurial orientation, it is interesting to note that community organisations are exhorted to adopt similar entrepreneurial principles.

"I think there's an issue there. I mean, I don't think that people are just treading water, you know. But, I mean, if you take the vast majority... of community organisations, community groups, how many of them have targets? What do they set themselves to achieve this week or next week or the week after, you know? What reviews do they take of their performance, you know? And I think a lot of organisations could do with applying some business or entrepreneurial principles to how they operate." (Community Representative B)

It was suggested that those local development organisations that had not proved their worth be dissolved – a point made with particular reference to area-based partnership companies.

"I mean, if you look at the Partnership structure, I mean, I think Partnerships for the most part have not achieved what they could have, you know. Their relevance is becoming more and more questionable, as RAPID and other things come into play. And primarily because - I mean, they had a unique situation, they were engaged in all of the areas of socio-economic disadvantage in the country. They could have collectively had a very strong opinion and voice around what them [those] issues were. But, they chose in the end to go to the lowest common denominator... there's good Partnerships and there's brutal Partnerships and that's known within the system now, you know. But, they continue to survive. I mean, my view would be, if you're not effective, you shouldn't exist, you know, some other entity should come into play." (Community Representative B)

Outcomes, hopes and fears for the community

For BRL, the provisions of the regeneration plan were presented very simply as the outcome for the community. The community's interests were understood to be indistinguishable from that same plan. Any additional community gain measures or provisions were accordingly judged to be surplus to requirements. The only outstanding issue was the manner in which such gains should be managed into the future. As concern was repeatedly expressed about bogus representative credentials among community organisations, it was apparent that such management functions would be vested in the public and private sectors. 'Community trust models' along BRL lines would also be examined.

"Community gain is the essence of the plan so there are no extra measures. Our real concern is how one manages those facilities into the future. The public authorities and the private sector has to take on their management. It's very easy on the part of community to put their hand up and say 'We want more community facilities'. There is also the issue of where public assets reside. They reside in the local authority but not in every case. There are lots of examples of public money and assets becoming vested in a few people claiming to be community organisations. This is not the only model because we are looking at community trusts. And BRL is also a model of that because its directors are drawn from different groups...I don't think there's anything more accountable."

"...The local authority is the only agency with the legitimacy to manage community facilities. But, we can see the potential of the model of community trusts...We're not opposed to transferring community facilities, if they had accountability and liability, for the public purse. People who shout and yell are not always representative." (BRL Senior Planner)

Hopes and fears about future social composition

In looking to the future of Ballymun, the attention of all interviewees turned to the future social composition of the area. For BRL, bringing in 'outside' 'richer' people and private residential development was clearly central to the future sustainability of the area. Affordable housing policies meanwhile will be used to inculcate the aspiration to home ownership

among the existing community. It was apparent that those who have been clamouring for greater community facilities will be obliged to concede their demands before the economic logic of regeneration programmes.

"A lot of people said they'd like a bookshop. We don't have the power to make a bookshop open in Ballymun. You have to have a lot of people who are willing to spend their money on books, to attract a bookshop. The new private residential development is hopefully bringing in a lot more money to the area. But, that's quite resented. There's a sense of ownership of the area and the way it evolves and develops. But, if you live in a marginalised area, one of the aspects of making it a better place to live is bringing in richer people. We have the supermarket now but it's still struggling, there's not enough extra people yet. The Motor Tax Office brings people in... If we listened to the community too much, we'd have a whole lot of community centres with no money to run them in five years' time. Bringing in outside people is part of the solution, while we would have really strong policies for affordable housing. Everyone's child can afford to aspire to an affordable house. (BRL Senior Planner)

Community representatives were anxious that the plan's social mix aspirations be realised but feared that the influx of private capital may in fact serve to consolidate social housing as the area's dominant tenure.

"And the other one [thing] I'm very worried about is the social mix, in the context of the private development being sold-off to investors, who then return it to Eastern Health Board at the expense of the change in social mix, you know. The whole idea of having the private/public housing was to bring in people with income and circumstances, so that you change the dependency ratios within the area. If a solicitor buys ten apartments and is allowed to do so in Ballymun and he then, you know, rents them to Eastern Health Board, you actually increase the dependency ratios." (Community Representative B)

While there was an understanding of the economic imperatives informing BRL's operation, fears persisted about the likelihood of achieving the desired social mix.

"BRL have to get money into the area. But, I think it's an issue and I think that there could be more creative thinking around that and I think there's going to have to be more creative thinking going forward. Otherwise, I think we could have a bigger problem than we had in the early eighties, when we had 80% social welfare dependency, 64% long-term unemployed." (Community Representative)

Those who did not anticipate the plan's failure on this front were still anxious about the difficulties which may arise in the move from flats to houses and in the mix of public and private housing residents.

"The people with existing houses had a big green and they don't any more. And then there's 'People coming in who I don't know'. Like, I know my neighbours' grandchildren... Everybody knows everybody. It's difficult to have thirty families coming in from the flats, who have no respect for people's gardens. Out there is all public space. The kids from the flats wouldn't recognise the boundaries of gardens and to them that's normal because they live in public space. People of my parents' generation would find that very offensive. They'd just run into your garden and get their ball because they're used to running around public spaces. They don't knock and say 'Sorry Mrs. Can I get my ball back?' You have to have a bit of understanding on both sides of the community divide." (Community Representative A)

Meanwhile, debate within the wider community about the proposed mix of housing tenures revealed an underlying unease and tension about the arrival of new categories of vulnerable residents into the area.

"I think there was some question and concern about some of the social housing and, you know, the different sorts of interests like, you know, for the homeless or mentally ill or - you know, that sort of stuff. And that's been embraced within the regeneration and I think rightly so, you know. I think the concern was 'Well, we don't want -', from some quarters, 'We don't

want everybody else's, you know, weak and weary relocated here because we're available', which is fair enough. But, at the same time, we have to take our fair share, you know, as a society, as part of society. I think, what I would be concerned about is, I think there's a growing racial tension in Ballymun, as some of the houses are being rented to non-nationals. And I think, as a nation, we're far more bigoted than we like to believe and I think that's causing issues. I mean, there's been people run out of houses in Ballymun in recent months. So, you know, I think there is them type of tensions." (Community Representative B)

Community concerns about housing affordability for the next generation were dismissed with a very neat rejoinder from one of the representatives of that same community. Being resident in an area did not confer any special rights over that area's housing stock.

"Yeah, there's been a certain element of that in Ballymun, you know. That, you know, 'What about our kids. Our kids have a right to -'. But, in the end, they have no more right than a kid in Malahide wanting a house. Just because your mother happened to live in Ballymun, doesn't mean to say you should have a right to a house in Ballymun. Do you know what I mean? ... I mean, people normally buy houses, you know, they look around, they buy it somewhere... And if a person in Malahide needs an affordable house, they have every right to look at Ballymun, as Johnny or Mary's daughter. Do you know what I mean? You know. I think that's again, sometimes the community has this or people have this perception that 'We're first amongst equals because, you know, we live here', you know. It doesn't happen - If you live in Santry, it doesn't happen that way. Your daughter might get a house in Coolock or Dun Laoghaire or - you know what I mean. For a variety of circumstances, you know. And I'm sure there's working class in Santry who would love to have affordable housing available to their kids. Their kids can't afford a house either. Do you know what I'm saying? So! I think some of the sort of arguments that are presented in that debate are not valid. And again - But, it's from the point of a high moral ground "Because we are of the community". (Community Representative B)

Fears for the future sustainability of the local economy

In a regeneration plan which embraced both the "relatively easy and predictable part of the regeneration project... building new homes" and the "much harder" task of "managing real economic and social improvements for the community" (BRL, 1998: 2), community fears extended beyond housing to the future sustainability of the local economy. The weakness of the plan's industrial and economic development strategies was a cause of particular concern.

"I mean, for me, the deficiencies in the regeneration are to do with the industrial development, the enterprise development. I think that there isn't a strong strategy there. I don't think that BRL on its own has the capacity to bring that to fruition and [they] don't seem to have the desire to engage with a broader industry sort of forum on that, you know. And I don't know why that is. I'm slightly concerned that they think they know best in all cases. And again, I don't think any of us know best in all cases. So, I'm worried about that. I think, you know, if we don't get a strong, vibrant local economy, that has huge implications for the future, in terms of sustainability five or ten years down the line." (Community Representative B)

Looking to the likely future social and economic composition and character of the Ballymun area, it is interesting to note the real task which BRL has outlined for itself in the regeneration of Ballymun.

"Our real job is to be capacity builders but to think like economic development specialists." (BRL Senior Planner)

6. BARRIERS TO COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The opening chapter of this report attended to the deepening entrepreneurial orientation that has come to define Irish urban planning over the past two decades. The reorientation of Irish planning around such an entrepreneurial ethos has taken place in tandem with the evolution of a more proclaimed participative form of local government that increasingly seeks to involve the community and voluntary sector in the implementation of local-authority policies and plans. In a changing context that has seen the growing alignment of local authorities with business and private-sector interests, local communities are now also invited to participate in the realisation of the many urban renewal, housing regeneration and major infrastructural projects planned for their areas. In noting the proliferation of partnerships established to oversee the preparation and implementation of many plans, critical attention has increasingly come to focus on the degree to which such structures are actually facilitating the meaningful participation of disadvantaged urban communities in Irish urban planning. Through the means of several case studies, this research has submitted this question to a detailed investigation of community participation in a range of planning contexts and institutional arrangements. The barriers which communities have encountered in seeking to assert and defend their interests within these structures are now presented under a series of thematic headings.¹⁴

6.1. Nature of the Commitment to Community Participation

Despite a proliferation of rhetorical commitments to community participation in the plans and projects under consideration in this report and a national legislative and European policy environment requiring local governments to “support community involvement with local authorities in a more participative local democracy,”¹⁵ the nature of the government’s commitment to community participation in planning remains questionable. In an environment in which community participation has become an official requirement, critical attention must look beyond the existence of formal structures of community participation to the manner in which the commitment has been realised.

A moveable commitment to community participation

In the case of the Liberties/Coombe IAP, the commitment to community participation seems to have been understood to operate on a sliding scale from genuine commitment, through pragmatic self-interest to a commitment flexible enough to respond to the dictates of capital. Some community voices testified to the existence of a genuine commitment on the part of the local authority. But where such a commitment was understood to exist, it appeared to be hampered by a number of both small-scale and larger structural factors. These ranged from the reluctant engagement of individual officials to the priority accorded to the property-development imperative which underwrote the renewal plans. Moreover, the positive assessment was often qualified upon more in-depth consideration regarding the true degree to which community participation had actually influenced the local authority’s actions. To the extent that a serious commitment was evident, it was understood to be based on an awareness of the dividends to be garnered from working with communities. Others who had

¹⁴ It is important in this context to note that the views presented in this report are the views of those individuals invited to represent formally their community’s interests in the various renewal, regeneration and infrastructural projects considered. This report is conscious that such views may not represent the range and diversity of positions, opinions, support and opposition to be found within the larger population of the case-study areas. This report does not purport to represent the views of individuals and groups outside such official structures. It is conscious that the difficulties and barriers encountered by formally-designated community representatives are likely to be compounded among individuals and groups seeking to assert and defend their interests outside of these structures, acting in an entirely unresourced and unrecognised capacity.

¹⁵ See <http://www.environ.ie/en/LocalGovernment/LocalGovernmentAdministration/LocalGovernmentPolicy/> for the central aims of the Local Government Act 2001.

persisted with extensive and exhaustive attempts to engage the local authority in the resolution of very serious community concerns meanwhile refused to recognise any genuine commitment on the part of Dublin City Council (DCC) to community participation.

The conclusion of the more critically-minded community representatives in the Liberties found resonance among the community of St. Michael's Estate. In the case of the latter, it was in fact possible to discern two markedly different assessments of DCC's commitment to community participation at different stages in the chronology of events that took place. From a starting point of deep-rooted resentment, mistrust and exclusion, the community was gradually to forge a good working participative relationship with the local authority in the revision, negotiation and agreement of a masterplan for the area's regeneration, with which most expressed satisfaction. In the process of reaching agreement on the revised masterplan, the community had come to believe that DCC was "genuinely becoming more open to facilitating meaningful community participation in decision-making." Subsequent events were, however, to see the jettisoning of both the agreed masterplan and the commitment to community participation that had informed its provisions. Following the Department of the Environment's rejection of the plan and its request that DCC investigate the possibility of regeneration *via* a public-private partnership arrangement, DCC proceeded with the formulation of the new framework plan without any attempt to re-engage the community in the same level of negotiations which had informed the original masterplan¹⁶. For this community, DCC's commitment to community participation was finally understood to be a mere rhetorical commitment which would never be given effect in practice. Renewed negotiations, which took place after the research for this project had been completed, were only undertaken following intense campaigning by the community itself and the embarrassing rejection of the officials' Masterplan by the City Council.

A similar disjuncture was discernable in the case of the Community Information Group (CIG) in Ringsend, where it was possible to arrive at two entirely different assessments of DCC's commitment to community participation. If the assessment were to be based on DCC's pioneering efforts in introducing additional measures to facilitate non-statutory participation (e.g. access to independent professional advice; the investment of significant time and resources; the provision of funding to allow for the procurement of independent legal advice), then the commitment to community participation might appear unparalleled. If, however, the assessment were to be based on a number of other and more fundamental factors (e.g. the initiation of the process of community consultation having taken place only *after* the crucial strategic planning decisions had been taken), then that commitment could be categorised as nothing more than "a PR exercise designed to smoothe the way for the implementation of decisions which had already been made." While DCC's attempts to engage the community within this carefully circumscribed consultation agenda were acknowledged to be genuine, the manner in which it proceeded to progress its plans for the location of the waste-to-energy facility on the Poolbeg Peninsula throughout the consultation process was also noted.

Positive assessments of commitments to participate

The commitment of the other local authorities and special purpose agencies considered in this report does not appear to have been called into similar question. In South Dublin City Council (SDCC) a series of holistic planning initiatives paved the way for a positive experience of community participation in the implementation of the Tallaght IAP. While SDCC's commitment to community participation was understood to follow from national policy requirements, as opposed to any inherent desire to engender greater democracy in the renewal process, it was felt that the Council had learnt much from the community's *modus operandi* and was gradually becoming more facilitative of community participation. Participation in this context appeared to pertain to community gain matters as opposed to

¹⁶ Because of the espoused requirement for secrecy in order to protect commercially sensitive information of the private-sector partner, PPP arrangements seem inherently unsuited to a genuinely participative partnership arrangement between local authorities and communities. For further discussion, see Hearne, R. (2006).

planning *per se*. While there was a general acceptance of SDCC's commitment to community participation in planning, progress in realising this commitment did, however, appear uneven. As in other areas, concerns about the degree to which community participation actually impacted on decision-making persisted.

If the community's admission to SDCC's implementation structures appeared to follow on national policy directives, community participation in the Dublin Docklands Development Authority (DDDA) followed from a history of conflictual and problematic relations with its predecessor, the Custom House Dublin Docks Development Authority (CHDDA). While the exertion of considerable community pressure on the CHDDA had not succeeded in securing a genuine forum within which genuine community participation could take place, the forums and opportunities offered by the DDDA received a considerably warmer welcome (see 5.3). While criticisms and qualifications were advanced in relation to aspects of the representation afforded the community, the DDDA's commitment to community participation was broadly accepted as genuine and the community considered that it had gained significantly through a process of genuine engagement.

Assessments in the case of the other special purpose authority considered in this report, Ballymun Regeneration Ltd (BRL), were divided on the nature of the regeneration authority's commitment to community participation. While BRL's comprehensive procedures for involving the wider community in the formulation of its regeneration plan have been described as a model of good practice, a number of significant criticisms were also offered of those same consultative structures and procedures. Community representatives on the Board of BRL belonged to the former group. While they understood BRL's public-sector understanding of consultation and participation to differ somewhat from their own, they expressed satisfaction with the manner in which BRL was managing the community participation element of its brief. Although it was criticised for demonstrating a gender bias in the allocation of representation on its board at the outset, that bias had been corrected and an inventory of the steps taken to facilitate community participation in the preparation of the masterplan was offered as evidence of its commitment. Any criticisms, such as those that might be advanced about the recruitment of a regeneration consultancy firm or the bypassing of some of the more established community organisations were tempered by pragmatic considerations about the exigencies attaching to BRL's task.

Process versus product

In an era in which the trumpeting of consultative and participative structures can serve to eclipse the substantive agenda being progressed through those same structures, it is interesting to note the manner in which Waterford City Council (WCC) headlined its consultative process in the regeneration of the Ballybeg Estate. It claimed that community consultation was of such importance that the process of consultation took precedence over the product of the final plan - a weighting that did not appear to find resonance in a community whose attention was firmly fixed on the future development of its area. Even had the community, somewhat implausibly, given priority to the process of participation over the outcomes and benefits deriving from that process, the local authority's actions would still have failed to convince the community of its commitment. While the council's decision to engage in the consultative process was understood to mark a fundamental shift in WCC's approach to the regeneration of poor areas and positive changes were noted in its operational culture, the community did not judge WCC to have been fully committed either to meaningful community participation in general or to community involvement in decision making in particular. A clear discrepancy between statutory and community understandings of "the meaning and scope of community participation" was noted.

While community assessments are an important barometer of the local authority's commitment to community participation, it is arguable that the strength of that commitment can be more readily discerned through an examination of the local authority's actions to give practical effect to that rhetorical commitment. Those actions are examined below.

6.2. Stage at which Community Participation was Sought

Non-engagement at strategic planning stage

It is clear from those communities consulted that very few had engaged in any form of forward or strategic planning. Very few had engaged in reviews of the key strategic planning document, the city development plan. As a consequence, very few had the opportunity to comment on the policies that informed and, to some extent, determined the future physical, economic and social complexion of their areas prior to the adoption of those policies. Communities typically entered the consultation process at a late stage in the process when the fundamental components of the pertinent policies had been determined.

Typical point of entry

Virtually all communities had been invited to participate in the consultation processes surrounding the formulation of the renewal and regeneration plans intended for their immediate areas. While pressure within the community of St. Michael's Estate had seen the community assume a very significant role in the revision and agreement of a masterplan that had originally been presented to the community as a *fait accompli*, its standing was to be significantly reduced thereafter as DCC reverted to form in the preparation of the later framework plan. In the latter, DCC failed to involve the community until it was again in a position to launch its draft plan as a *fait accompli*. It was at this point only that it convened a series of perfunctory meetings to describe the plan and seek feedback to its content.

Community involvement in the formulation of plans should not be confused with involvement in or determination of the fundamentals of those plans. In a number of cases, the community's involvement was sought only after key strategic decisions had already been taken. The decision to pursue the regeneration of St. Michael's Estate through a public-private partnership altered the standing of that community in all subsequent planning and consultation processes irrevocably. The community's input into the manner in which the regeneration of the Ballybeg Estate would take place was similarly circumscribed by national policy imperatives and county-level strategic planning. From the point at which it was invited to enter the process, the community had participated in neither strategic policy discussion or the planning process and it was therefore obliged to contend with a number of non-negotiable elements of major significance (e.g. extensive private residential development and accompanying road infrastructure development) .

The late entry of the community of Ringsend was judged to be "perhaps the most serious flaw with the community information group process." Their entry into the process in 2001 followed the adoption of the *Waste Management Plan for the Dublin Region* in 1998, a plan that had omitted to specify possible locations for the planned thermal treatment plant and had therefore not attracted the attention of the communities of Ringsend and Irishtown. Once adopted, the Dublin City Manager was obliged by law to proceed with the development of the thermal treatment plan within the DCC area. Only when the Poolbeg Peninsula emerged as the preferred site for the new treatment facility in 1999 did DCC seek to apprise the community of this fact and to engage it in a process of consultation.

Repercussions of late entry

The absence of disadvantaged communities from the strategic planning process in general and the public consultation process surrounding the review of urban development plans in particular, effectively allowed the government to take strategic planning decisions which had a profound impact on the lives and locales of poor communities without ever having recourse to the views, concerns and interests of those same communities. This stands as one of the most significant barriers to community participation in all subsequent planning processes. Statutory provisions relating to public consultation during the development plan review process were judged to be clearly inadequate to the task of enabling poor communities to engage in meaningful participation in decisions directly affecting their neighbourhoods.

Individuals with a long-standing engagement with planning had previously observed the very damaging planning outcomes visited on poor communities on foot of their abstention from

the strategic planning arena. For such individuals, the conviction that communities must become involved in planning at the earliest possible stage had led to a wide-ranging involvement in the planning process, encompassing development plans, integrated area planning, the regeneration of local-authority flats complexes, the development of transport infrastructure and site-specific planning issues. However, in the absence of resources, this had remained the position of lone committed individuals and had not been generalised to the wider community.

6.3. Adequacy of the Structures

In many cases, community representatives were critical of the structures in which their involvement in renewal and regeneration had been mediated. Criticisms typically referred to their participation in structures of no standing or their relegation to after-the-fact roles.

Relegation to after-the-fact monitoring roles

Community involvement in the negotiation of the masterplan for the regeneration of St. Michael's Estate took place through the St. Michael's Estate Task Force, a structure described as "kind of the monitoring body. It was the only show in town where ideas were put forward and back and where we could sit with the Council." It was not, however, a body that provided the community with any standing when the Department of the Environment decided to reject the plan on the grounds of the expense involved. In the wake of that rejection, residents became bitterly aware of the weakness of their position in contrast to that of Fatima Mansions. The framework plan for the regeneration of Fatima had been agreed within a legally-constituted structure with "legal obligations that had to be upheld... [a situation in which] City Council had no outs." Such a situation did not obtain in St. Michael's Estate where the community was left without any recourse beyond the good faith on which its agreement with DCC had been reached. "Because there is no actual legal document or legal agreements, they don't have to do anything that we've agreed to at all."

In contrast to the community's experience in St. Michael's Estate, where the adequacy of the structures in which community participation was taking place had only latterly come into focus, the relegation of communities to a monitoring after-the-fact role in the implementation of the Integrated Area Plans was of ongoing concern. While the concern was raised in the case of the Tallaght IAP, it received its fullest articulation in the case of the Liberties/Coombe where the inadequacy of the structures for community participation had been identified as a serious obstacle from the outset. While DCC had originally proposed inviting community representatives to participate within a cross-sectoral 'Steering Committee', it subsequently dispensed with that proposal and established a Monitoring Committee in its place. While a Steering Committee would have been mandated to adopt a directive, agenda-setting and decision-making role, a Monitoring Committee, by definition, relegated its members to a monitoring after-the-fact role. The significance of such a relegation was to become fully apparent as the community became increasingly critical about the manner in which the IAP was being implemented. It was, in fact, to discover that not only had it been obliged to concede the direction and steering roles which it had been led to expect from verbal promises and from the IAP document but it was also later forced to recognise that the lesser monitoring role with which it had been entrusted was merely symbolic.

The lesser role accorded to communities

In other communities, there was agreement on the lesser role accorded to community representatives within the structures overseeing the renewal and regeneration of their areas (Ballymun and Ballybeg). While some community representatives refused to criticise the statutory body for retaining the significant power within its executive body, others became increasingly convinced of the need for a statutory requirement obliging local authorities to take the views of local people into account in local area planning. It was suggested that the community's views would not be given due credence or recognition until such time as its views were underwritten by such a specific legal provision. In those instances where

community representatives declined to express any criticism of the structures established to facilitate community participation, it was interesting to note the existence of considerably more trenchant criticisms among the wider constituent communities.

Admission to decision-making structures

The nature of the structures in which the community of Dublin's Docklands was invited to participate in the DDDA stands in sharp contrast both to the structures established in other communities and to those established in previous incarnations of the development authority. In contrast to the CHDDA's community liaison committee (CLC), which had been widely viewed as "a sop to the community and a vehicle for smoothing the way for economic regeneration," the DDDA invited the community's representatives both to participate in a newly inaugurated CLC but also, more significantly, in the DDDA Council itself. The inclusion of the community within the Council was viewed as a very significant move towards facilitating community participation in decision-making. It was described in euphoric terms as "the first time I'd say in the history of this State... seven local people from Docklands, community activists, who are involved at the decision-making table... revolutionary even."

In their capacity as Council members, community representatives were to use their position to argue for the inclusion of key community priorities in the Masterplan; a plan with legal standing. "The social agenda... [which would be] very much built into the fabric of the masterplan... [would be] protected through legislation." And while community representatives experienced the same power differential encountered in other communities, they did nevertheless exercise one very important power – the power to grant or withhold their approval from the Masterplan and the knowledge that the plan could not proceed until all parties had 'signed off' on it.

In the midst of such celebrations of the role and powers afforded the community of the Docklands, it is also important to note the very significant planning power withheld from the wider community of the Docklands. The DDDA was empowered to introduce fast-track S.25 planning schemes; planning schemes that allowed community representatives and the general public to make submissions at public display stage but which rescinded thereafter the right of third-party appeal in areas covered by the planning schemes.

The manner in which community representation was accorded

Notwithstanding such positive assessments of the representation afforded the community of the Docklands, earlier concerns about the manner in which community representatives had been selected by the CHDDA resurfaced in the selection of community representatives for the Council of the DDDA. First, the pool from which community representatives were chosen was determined by community nominations. "And I suppose the stronger you were within a community, the more people or the more groups you could get to write in on your behalf." More fundamentally, while nominated by local community groups, community representatives were ultimately selected and appointed by the Minister, a procedure that compounded concerns about the lack of transparency and democracy evident in the process.

In Ringsend, suspicion and criticism repeatedly returned to the manner in which the members of the Community Information Group (CIG) had been selected by the independent selection committee convened by DCC. The inclusion of a small number of participants from outside the immediate Ringsend area, some of whom were in favour of incineration, and one of whom was referred to as an evident 'plant', was the subject of particular criticism. While DCC rejected all such charges and criticisms with reference to the independent selection process and criteria established to determine the membership of the CIG, the manner in which representatives had been chosen remained "a huge issue."

If not always from expected quarters, the manner in which community representatives were selected also arose as a matter of concern in other case studies. For example in the Tallaght IAP, , it was left to local-authority officials to express concern about the monopolisation of community representative positions by the larger and more established community organisations. While it had been envisaged that the interests of smaller community groups

and residents' associations would be represented by elected representatives, this had not transpired to be the case.

In a climate in which the presence and participation of community representatives within the local authority's renewal and regeneration structures is cited as an implicit endorsement of the plans and projects being progressed through those same structures, community representatives in the Liberties/Coombe IAP understood the issue to be of fundamental importance. They pointed to the ease with which other players both invoked the term 'community' and made assumptions about the constituency denoted by the term before moving to question whether community organisations were actually representative of the communities that they purported to represent. While DCC acknowledged concerns about the representative nature of 'community representatives' to be 'a fair point,' it also conceded that it did not look beyond or beneath existing organisations and committees when inviting communities to participate in its plans.

6.4. Accessibility of Local-Authority Planners, Officials and Planning Information

Good access in some instances

In a number of instances, community representatives appeared to enjoy good access to the local authority's planners and officials. Community representatives in Tallaght and Ballymun, for example, reported good access to planners and other officials and there was general agreement on the clarity and accessibility of plans and proposals produced. In some cases, the degree of access enjoyed was attributed to the calibre and commitment of individual planners and officials. The commitment of a senior planner from Waterford City Council (WCC) and the significance of a planning course delivered by him were singled out for particular attention in the regeneration of Ballybeg, as was the significance of earlier relationships forged with local authority planners through feminist networks in Ballymun. In Dublin's Docklands, officials were judged to have made every effort to ensure the full participation of all community representatives in the meetings of the DDDA Council. Plans and maps were generally presented in an accessible manner while documents incorporated glossaries of all technical terms used. Where plans and proposals were not accessible, community representatives were afforded the time and opportunity to question officials and consultants. The practice of keeping community representatives informed extended to the wider community of Docklands which was invited to attend an annual regeneration conference.

Inadequate and incomplete information

Good access to planners and officials did not, however, always guarantee consistent and timely access to pertinent information. In almost all cases, communities were obliged to take the initiative in sourcing pertinent site-specific information. While the community of Ballybeg enjoyed relatively cordial relations with WCC in accessing both general information about the BACK plan and specific information about individual plans and proposals, it remained largely dependent on local community groups for notification of planning applications on specific sites. Local groups were acknowledged to have played a key role in this respect, but it was a role whose efficacy was severely compromised by the shortage of resources. In an environment in which the community was obliged to rely on the local authority's formal mechanisms for public notification and display of draft plans and individual planning applications, it frequently became aware of proposed developments only when it was too late to make representations or submissions.

Community representatives in Tallaght reported similar concerns. South Dublin County Council (SDCC) was complimented on the degree of access provided to information regarding the IAP's community-gain mechanism and forward planning in general. It was, however, criticised for its significantly less pro-active role in the dissemination of information relating to individual planning applications and proposals. At the point at which pertinent and site-specific information trickled down to the community, it was often too late to oppose planning applications. Members of the IAP monitoring committee did not appear to have been any better informed than the general public in this respect.

Community anger at the selective dissemination of information was not confined to information regarding individual developments. The withholding of information about fundamental aspects of regeneration plans served to reinforce earlier negative perceptions regarding local authorities. In the case of Ballybeg, the community was not initially informed that the regeneration of its estate would entail the rezoning of substantial adjoining lands for residential use. As a consequence, it entered into the consultation process with WCC with incomplete information about fundamental aspects of the plan.

Withholding of information

While the above communities were at least in a position to report both positive and negative aspects about the degree of access enjoyed to planners and planning information, other communities found themselves in a situation in which they were increasingly denied the information necessary to participate in the implementation of their respective renewal and regeneration plans. For the communities in question, the accessibility of local-authority planners appeared to rest on the nature of relations between the community and local authority at any given time. As relations between local authority and community deteriorated, so too did access to pertinent information.

The community of St. Michael's Estate enjoyed the greatest access to local authority officials while both statutory and community bodies were engaged in the agreement of a revised masterplan for the estate's regeneration. Following the rejection of that plan by the DoE, the conciliatory relationship between the two parties was reconstituted along earlier confrontational lines and the degree of access previously granted was withdrawn. While the community had come to regard DCC's commitment to community participation as genuine during the revision and agreement of the masterplan, it was to find it difficult to obtain even the most basic information about the new framework plan that DCC subsequently set about preparing unilaterally. It was also to become convinced that DCC had possessed previous knowledge of the public-private partnership intended for the estate but had chosen to withhold it throughout the negotiation of the masterplan for politically expedient reasons.

The community of the Liberties/Coombe meanwhile did not appear to enjoy good access to either planners or pertinent information at any point during its engagement with the local authority once the implementation of the IAP had commenced. Elected representatives noted the access that the community might technically enjoy to local-authority officials but suggested that the knowledge differential between the two parties rendered any such access meaningless. While the community noted the great clarity evident in DCC's early presentation of the standing and content of the IAP, it did not note any such lucidity in DCC's highly technical and perfunctory presentations of information thereafter. On occasions, DCC was characterised as 'selling' information in an attempt to 'dupe' the community into endorsing greatly increased building heights and densities for the area. The more critical representatives refuted any suggestion that DCC had attempted to keep the community informed. The inaccessibility of information material to the monitoring of the IAP was readily identified as a very significant barrier to effective community participation. While the covert decision to accord precedence to a guideline document over the IAP may have constituted the most significant informational barrier encountered by the community, it appeared to be part of a broader practice of withholding information until such time as necessary decisions had been made elsewhere.

More apposite questions

Attention in the Liberties was, in any case, increasingly coming to focus on other and more apposite questions than the degree of access enjoyed to local authority planners, officials and information, namely the factors and relations upon which that access was dependent. This point was made with particular attention to the necessity of communities' adopting a conciliatory, quiescent, non-confrontational stance *vis-à-vis* local-authority plans; community reluctance to trust to the advice of the local authority's planners and architects; the case for securing independent technical advice; the similarly disadvantaged position in which elected

representatives found themselves *vis-à-vis* local-authority officials and the considerably greater access enjoyed by those with vested interests.

Information designed to impede participation

While some sought to defend their community's interests in the absence of adequate information, others found themselves handicapped by a surplus of information. The nature of the community information group process in Ringsend involved 'unparalleled' access to independent professional experts on a wide range of issues relating to waste management and incineration. While DCC and the various experts contracted had provided the community with copious amounts of technical information, it was perceived to be in a manner designed to confuse and ultimately impede engagement. In the absence of the additional professional expertise and assistance that would have allowed the community to decipher the import of that technical information, it was concluded to have been an essentially perfunctory exercise in information giving. While DCC appeared content to impart endless reams of certain types of technical information to the community, it consistently evaded requests to provide information on the two most contentious issues at stake for the community; the precise location of the waste management facility and the type of technology to be employed.

6.5. Adequacy of Timeframe for Community Participation

Access to timely and pertinent information was one of the prerequisites for effective community participation. Thereafter communities needed sufficient time to deliberate and decide on appropriate courses of action. The timeframe attaching to planning processes proved problematic for communities on a number of fronts. The very specific timeframes obtaining in the submission of planning observations and planning appeals presented a very real barrier for communities seeking to oppose unwanted developments. The timescale attaching to community participation in the planning of larger-scale renewal, regeneration and infrastructural projects was similarly problematic.

In a situation in which communities were obliged both to process and assess very technical information and apprise their constituent communities of the import of very technical plans and proposals, the time allotted to facilitate community participation and elicit informed consent assumed a particular significance. Genuine community development was described as "a slow process" and one in which "you're constantly going back to the people and making sure that people on the ground know what's happening." In a number of instances, communities judged the timeframe allotted for community participation to be simply inadequate to the task. The explanations posited for this failing on the part of local authorities ranged from the benign to the less forgiving.

Inadequate timeframes – the benign assessment

Community personnel pointed to a clear divergence between statutory and community understandings of community participation and the timeframes necessary for each. The community of St. Michael's Estate judged the time constraints under which they were placed to be contrary to the democratic and accountable principles underpinning the practice of community organisations. Such principles obliged them to consult and involve residents in the decision-making process surrounding all major proposals as a matter of course; a time-consuming process with which DCC had 'great difficulties'. A similar tension also emerged in both Ballybeg and Tallaght where the community's preference for a 'deliberative model' of community participation came into conflict with local authority's preference for a more 'representative model'.

The 'deliberative model' was described as one in which individual residents and local groups would be drawn into broadly-based participation processes that allowed community representatives to consult with their constituent groups prior to reaching a position on any major issue. The 'representative model' was meanwhile described as one in which the local authority would confine its consultative and participative processes to those community groups operating in a formally designated or representative capacity. It was clear in a

number of cases that community and statutory parties were operating with sharply contrasting ideas about the degree to which such participative processes should expand to incorporate the larger constituent communities outside the local authority's representative structures.

Inadequate timeframes –more critical views

In some situations, community groups insisted on adhering to the lengthy procedures involved in democratic and accountable decision making. In other situations, that opportunity was effectively denied them. In the more benign assessment of such matters, the scheduling of key deadlines around holiday periods might be judged to be the merely unthinking and careless actions of a local authority not wholly committed to community participation. The less benign assessment, however, understood such timing to be a deliberate attempt to minimise community participation by knowingly scheduling key decisions for those times when communities would experience greatest difficulty in participating. Those who noted the posting of important planning announcements at times when the attention of community activists and politicians was likely to be engaged elsewhere spoke of attempts to 'subvert' and 'corrupt' the consultative process. While the setting of unrealistic and impracticable timeframes was in many ways understood as one more barrier compounding other and more fundamental barriers, it also led some to conclude that consultation processes were little more than public-relations exercises.

Time constraints imposed from outside the process

In addition to contending with the timelines and deadlines set for community consultation, communities also had to contend with the tendency of some local authorities to jettison their commitment to community participation to pursue new streams of statutory funding. Concern at such practices in Ballybeg led to a community resolution to develop a comprehensive ten-year plan that would present a fully-considered and agreed position on the area's future, thereby allowing the community to step outside the reactive and defensive role to which it had been confined to date.

6.6. Adequacy of Resourcing

The resources required to engage in the planning process assume two dimensions; the professional and the financial. The professional dimension relates to the technical knowledge necessary to decipher the full import of planning proposals and to formulate objections and appeals to contested planning applications and permissions thereafter, while the financial element includes the fees attached to the submission of planning objections and appeals. The dearth of both categories of resources severely impeded the meaningful participation of many of those communities consulted. This point is made with reference to both the renewal and regeneration process in general and the planning process in particular.

6.6.1 Dearth of professional expertise

While there was ready agreement on the educational barriers that impede the participation of disadvantaged communities in the planning process, the dearth of technical and professional expertise within or accessible to those same communities appears to have constituted a considerably more formidable barrier to community participation. Even had the areas in question not been characterised by the low educational attainment that is a feature of impoverished communities, they would still have been without the financial means to procure the specialist professional advice accessible to more affluent communities. Notwithstanding a long-held conviction on the part of some that community engagement in such crucial matters should always be underwritten by independent professional advice, almost all communities entered into the planning arena without any such resources.

The impenetrability of the planning system

The impenetrability of the planning system for those without specialist planning knowledge was a recurring theme in many of the communities consulted. This difficulty arose for those engaging in planning in all of its stages and manifestations; the review process surrounding development plans; the consultation process concerning the preparation of local renewal and regeneration plans; the deciphering of the intent and impact of proposed developments from individual planning applications; the couching of community concerns about proposed developments in the technocratic planning terms necessary to have submissions and appeals deemed legitimate.

In the absence of independent advice and resources, disadvantaged communities entered into a planning arena in which the local and specially-designated authorities enjoyed an effective monopoly over all available professional and technical expertise. The position of extreme vulnerability occupied by almost all communities in such a setting was very evident. Community representatives in one area, for example, described the manner in which the local authority used its monopoly over technical expertise to veto discussion on several key issues and to render any explanation of the logic underpinning its decisions unnecessary. A number of community representatives also spoke of the ease with which communities could be intimidated by the technical jargon, formality and arrogance of professionals. In some cases, individual community representatives managed to read themselves into very informed positions on the developments intended for their area but still found themselves in a hopelessly disadvantaged and inequitable position *vis-à-vis* local authorities and private developers. Others simply floundered.

In an environment in which many felt at a distinct disadvantage, some community representatives appear to have engaged in an overly emotive manner at the expense of a more critical and considered engagement with the facts of the situation. In some cases it took community representatives several meetings to summon the confidence to contribute to proceedings – thereby foregoing several opportunities to represent the community's interests in the process.

More seriously, it is clear that the lack of competency on planning matters obliged some community representatives simply to absent themselves from discussions and decisions on planning matters in order to concentrate on the overtly social and anti-poverty aspects of plans. This appeared to be the option chosen by certain community representatives in at least two of the case studies featured (Tallaght IAP and DDDA). In the latter case, the tendency of some community representatives to undervalue their own knowledge and experience in the face of professional expertise constituted a further impediment to community engagement. One community representative described how the community concentrated its energy on the social agenda, leaving planning matters to those who were 'experts in that field.' In many cases it was clear that community representatives were not making the vital connection between the land-use decisions being taken and the future socio-economic interests and very viability of their communities.

The limited resources with which some engaged

Notwithstanding the absence of technical expertise, some elected to engage with the substantive planning issues at stake in their respective plans. In a small number of cases, communities succeeded in enlisting the *pro bono* assistance of professionals. In others, they appear to have trusted to the independence of local-authority planners. This was not, however, a general position. Those community representatives who engaged with the planning decisions being made within the Liberties/Coombe IAP judged local-authority planners and officials to be constrained and compromised by their organisational positions to a degree that prevented any approach to them for advice or assistance. As the implementation of the IAP proceeded, it became clear that there was no basis on which that advice could have been accepted as being objective and impartial. The community of the Liberties found itself, as a consequence, in a position in which it was obliged to confront the local authority and its professional resources without recourse to any technical advice beyond that available from a community policy analyst and community-based planner.

In addition to having to contend with the very evident resource inequality between it and the local authority, those who sought to defend their interests through the statutory planning system were also confronted by a private-development sector with a range of technical expertise at its disposal. That panoply of experts included professional planners, architects, landscape architects, engineers, traffic consultants, archaeologists, ecologists, daylight and sunlight specialists. In contrast, communities typically approached the planning process with, perhaps, the part-time assistance of a community development worker or, if they were fortunate, with the services of a single community-based planner with responsibility for an impossibly large geographical area (Inner Dublin). In those cases where community representatives were obliged to adopt an adversarial stance and appeal the local authority's planning permissions to An Bord Pleanála, that vulnerability became increasingly pronounced.

The demand for resources

Those who sought to represent and defend their communities' interests in the renewal and regeneration of their areas were to become increasingly convinced of the need to resource community participation in the planning system. For some, this translated into a request for the resources that would allow communities to purchase their own expert advice where such advice was deemed necessary. For others, it was a request for the resources that would allow communities to adopt a permanent watching brief on planning matters. Having arrived at a fuller understanding of the significance and magnitude of planning matters, many recognised the fallacy of either allowing or expecting volunteers to bear the responsibility for what was effectively a full-time professional working brief.

In an environment in which inadequate funding was impeding the operation of the community sector more generally, participation in renewal and regeneration programmes represented one more burden thrust upon disadvantaged communities. Community representatives argued that this responsibility would be more appropriately vested in professionals employed or contracted to work on the community's behalf. The call for resources in Ballybeg, for example, took the form of resources for both the procurement of independent professional advice and the establishment of full-time community positions with a dedicated planning brief. The latter request was endorsed by community representatives on both the Tallaght and Liberties/Coombe IAPs.

While agreeing that the absence of technical and professional expertise presented a significant barrier for communities wishing to engage in the planning process, some communities failed to reach agreement on whether or not such a deficit should be redressed. Seizing upon the significance of the resource barrier, one community representative in Ballymun made a very strong case for the *pro bono* provision of architectural, planning and engineering expertise for the community; a need all the more pronounced in light of the profoundly unequal position occupied by poorly-educated communities confronting confident professional bodies. This position was not, however, shared by the community's other representative who rejected any argument for the provision of independent technical expertise on the grounds that it might provide a platform for those seeking to oppose and stall plans being progressed within the regeneration body.

Rare instances of concession

While local authorities steadfastly refused to concede the case for providing communities with the resources that would allow them to procure independent technical advice, they appear to have conceded the case to some degree in two of the communities consulted in this report.

Chastened by the planning errors that had gone undetected in the first phase of the redevelopment of its estate, the community of St. Michael's Estate repeatedly requested the services of an independent architect in the revision of the local authority's masterplan. In this instance, Dublin City Council acceded to the request and the community was to find the services of an independent architect enormously beneficial in both deciphering the content of the local authority's proposals and in formulating the community's considered response. The

local authority's willingness to resource the community's engagement appears, however, to have been confined to the phase when relations between the two parties were reasonably conciliatory. Although DCC again acceded to community requests for independent architectural advice during the consultation process surrounding the later and much contested framework plan, it did so in a much reduced form. On this occasion, the community was to enjoy the services of an independent architect for only four-days.

The community information group process in Ringsend was, as already noted, distinguished by the degree of access to independent experts on a wide range of issues relating to waste management. In addition to this diverse range of experts contracted by DCC, the local authority also provided the community with funding to access its own legal advice. While community representatives pronounced themselves satisfied with the degree of expertise afforded them, subsequent discussions revealed a rather more disconcerting situation in which the community was left to grapple with large quantities of excessively technical information without the additional expert advice that that would have enabled it to assess its precise meaning and import. In a very technical process in which the community found itself at a distinct disadvantage, some were "very clear that very little in the way of consultation actually went on in the course of CIG sessions. Instead, they were provided with an overload of technical information and a series of complicated briefings, rather than a proper opportunity to debate the issues and offer meaningful feedback." The process was viewed as being "too much of a set up for locally-based people."

6.6.2 *Dearth of financial resources*

In addition to the unquantifiable costs of the professional and technical knowledge required to engage in the planning system, those who sought to defend their interests within the statutory planning system confronted the clearly quantifiable costs of the fees attached to the lodging of planning objections and appeals. If communities were obliged to forego the expert planning advice at the disposal of both the local authority and the private-development sector, they were to find planning fees non-negotiable.

While the €20 fee required to lodge a submission on individual planning applications may appear negligible to many, it represented a substantial deduction from the incomes of unemployed people and was thus problematic in its own right for some. Although poor financial circumstances did not pose a significant barrier to the lodging of submissions at planning application stage for most, costs were acknowledged as posing a very considerable barrier at planning-appeal stage when decisions had moved to the ambit of An Bord Pleanála. In the case of the Liberties/Coombe IAP, for example, where some community representatives undertook to appeal successive breaches of the IAP to An Bord Pleanála, individuals incurred very significant expenses in a personal capacity.

Although planning fees did not emerge as a significant barrier to community participation in a number of the other communities consulted, it is interesting to note that the circumstances obtaining in many of those communities did not dispose them to seek resolution of their planning concerns through the statutory planning process. In a number of cases, community representatives were party to the consensus that had evolved around individual renewal or regeneration plans. In Ballymun, for example, one community representative argued that those with planning concerns should abjure the statutory planning system to seek resolution of their concerns within the consensual confines of existing neighbourhood and partnership structures. The evolution of a broad consensus surrounding the IAP in Tallaght similarly removed any need to engage or take issue with the detail of the planning developments taking place within the IAP. In Dublin's Docklands, meanwhile, the DDDA's S.25 planning schemes enjoyed an exempted development status that limited third-party input to submissions at draft planning scheme stage and removed the third-party right of appeal thereafter.

Thus, a number of communities did not identify the need for resources to defray the costs incurred in objecting and appealing to planning applications and permissions. However, many did (as outlined above) identify a n imperative requirement for more wide-ranging

financial resources to defray the continuing costs of engaging with the planning and regeneration process generally.

6.6.3 Dearth of political resources

Those who did find themselves outside the consensual confines of the plans and projects under consideration in this report and who managed to muster sufficient financial and technical resources to engage in the planning process were to come to a gradual realisation of the scale of the resources required to exert any influence over the state's planning decisions; resources that extended far beyond the requisite technical advice and planning fees. They were to conclude that the significant planning decisions were being taken outside of the public arena and being determined by political influence and financial power, as opposed to any impartial adjudication on the planning merits of a given planning application. This was the conclusion of those who engaged most closely with the planning process in the implementation of the Liberties/Coombe IAP. It was also the conclusion of some councillors who observed the increasing politicisation of planning in a corporate decision-making environment in which the decisions of senior local-authority managers were increasingly being privileged over the advice of senior planners.

6.7. Power Differential between Community Representatives, Local-Authority Officials and Other Stakeholders

The momentum surrounding the social partnership approach, that has increasingly sought to engage poor communities in the implementation of renewal, regeneration and infrastructural projects, has sometimes served to eclipse the very different standings enjoyed by different stakeholders within these projects. Many of the communities consulted in this report entered into the state's consultation and implementation processes with keen memories of the very unequal standing which they had traditionally enjoyed in their relations with local authorities. That standing does not appear to have been altered to any significant degree in the renewal, regeneration and infrastructural initiatives under consideration.

An inequality rooted in resource inequality

While the inclusion of community representatives within the decision-making structures of the DDDA was the cause of much celebration in Dublin's Docklands, the markedly unequal position of the various stakeholders on the Council was judged to pose a very serious barrier to the effective participation of community representatives. That inequality was rooted in the fundamental inequality of resources underwriting the participation of the Council's different stakeholders. In contrast to the DDDA which commanded significant public funding and the business and private-development sector backed by significant private capital, the community of the Docklands entered onto the Council of the DDDA with no resources at its disposal. In the power differential that ensued, one community representative described the manner in which DDDA officials and civil servants would sometimes use the threat of funding withdrawal to quash community objections. A similar dynamic was reported in the operation of the monitoring committee of the Tallaght IAP where the power differential between the community representatives and the other stakeholders emerged as a serious impediment to community participation. The unequal position of nominal partners was again located in the very different levels of resourcing available to each stakeholder.

An inequality rooted in the symbolic role afforded communities

That inequality also arose directly from the differing degrees of power conferred on each stakeholder. While the community of St. Michael's Estate was free to engage exhaustively in the preparation of the masterplan for the regeneration of its estate, it did not have the authority or standing to ensure that the plan would actually be implemented. The ease with which the agreed plan could be dispensed with also served to unveil the structurally significantly power differential between that community and the main power behind the local authority, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Events were similarly to oblige other communities to cut through the stake-holding and partnership rhetoric to clarify their precise standing in relation to both the local authority and its departmental masters in central government. In the case of the Liberties/Coombe IAP, it took a sustained and critical three-year engagement on the part of the community to obtain clarification of its precise standing in the implementation of the IAP. While DCC never acceded to the community's demands for the terms of reference governing its engagement with the IAP, the Department of the Environment was, when pressed, categorical in outlining the community's lack of standing within the plan. Its statement that both the implementation and the monitoring of the IAPs were in law matters within the competency of the local authority was the first clear admission which the community had received that it had never been intended to exercise any power or authority in the IAP's implementation.

An inequality vis-à-vis other stakeholders

The power differential impeding the community's participation was not confined to that between community representatives and local-authority officials. Within the confines of the consultative and participative structures established by local authorities, community representatives in both the Tallaght and Liberties/Coombe IAPs encountered a similar power differential in their dealings with elected representatives. In Tallaght, some felt that the process was "predominantly politically influenced" and that the balance of power lay with elected representatives. In a relationship that was characterised by a similarly uneasy tension, community representatives in the Liberties/Coombe expressed criticism about the party-political ends to which some elected councillors had appropriated the chairing of the monitoring committee and the administration of the community-gain component of the plan. A rather more fundamental concern was also expressed about the property interests with which some elected representatives approached the monitoring committee table.

While largely absent from the partnership structures overseeing the implementation of the various plans, the powerlessness of communities in the face of the power and influence of the private-development sector was absolute. The experience of community representatives in the Liberties/ Coombe in seeking to ensure that the IAP would be implemented in accordance with the design specifications attached to each of the plan's tax designated sites, emerged as a clear illustration of the position of powerlessness occupied by poor communities. In presuming to challenge both the planning decisions of the local authority and the plans of the private-development sector, it found itself in a planning arena in which it was obliged to confront not only a public sector with something approaching autocratic decision-making powers but also a private-development sector with enormous resources at its disposal .

A power differential rooted in the larger political culture.

Looking beyond the particulars of the Irish planning system, some sought an explanation for the unequal power relations confronting poor communities in a larger political culture inimical to community participation. Real community participation was understood to be incompatible with the interests of the Irish state, which instead contented itself with an abundance of rhetorical commitments and spurious participative structures without any corresponding devolution of power that would have given effect to that rhetoric.

6.8. Distrust, Demoralisation, Alienation and Apathy

In undertaking to engage with the state in the implementation of the various renewal and regeneration projects, communities were obliged to overcome a considerable degree of distrust bequeathed by previous contentious engagements with the local authority. The legacy of distrust was attributed to a number of factors (e.g. a record of poor housing management in St. Michael's and Ballybeg Estates; a history of perceived neglect and ill-treatment in Dublin's Docklands and Liberties; a poor record in the enforcement of environmental standards in Ringsend, an area perceived to be burdened with a

disproportionate number of unwelcome utilities and industries). Such a history was clearly not conducive to the inspiration of confidence or the forging of relationships of trust.

Breaches of trust

In seeking to persuade disadvantaged urban communities that the initiatives in question represented a new form of governance in which communities could confidently place their trust, it is clear that local authorities faced a very significant challenge. It is equally clear that most did not rise to this challenge. Subsequent breaches of trust were to compound the degree of distrust that had traditionally characterised and impeded engagements between local authorities and poor communities.

In some cases, communities received early indications that they had no grounds to trust to the full and timely disclosure of all material information. The residents of Ballybeg set about the engagement with the regeneration of their estate on the understanding that the planning process had not been prejudiced by any prior decisions. However, it did not learn that the regeneration of its estate would entail very extensive private residential development on adjoining lands until it had actually embarked on the consultation process. The residents of St Michael's Estate were, in contrast, obliged to proceed through a lengthy two-year engagement and the forging of a relationship of trust with the local authority before coming to a full realisation of the extent to which their trust had been misplaced. That relationship was to be further corroded by the suspicion that their engagement in negotiating the agreed masterplan had been little more than a pointless subterfuge for the public-private partnership process which was subsequently embarked upon. While this community was to remain dependent on DCC for the regeneration of its estate, there were fears that the relationship between the two parties had deteriorated to an extent that made future meaningful engagement impossible.

In the case of the Liberties/Coombe, the breach of trust came only after the implementation of the IAP had begun. The community of the Liberties/ Coombe entered into the monitoring committee of the IAP with the assurance of very specific commitments in relation to both the socio-economic dimensions of the plan and the very specific design specifications attaching to each of the plan's tax designated sites. Only gradually did it become apparent that the community's trust in the plan's socio-economic objectives had been unwarranted. However, the community was to come to an abrupt realisation that its trust in the plan's physical development specifications had been entirely misplaced. This breach of trust was all the greater because it represented a breach of both the local authority's framework plan and the sworn evidence of its officials. Those who engaged most closely with the planning dimension of the IAP concluded that DCC had sought to dupe the community about the true nature of the development intended for the area. Community trust was to be fatally undermined by the subsequent and accidental viewing of an internal memorandum stating that the IAP had been superseded by new residential density guidelines and was effectively of no standing.

The community's participation in the community information group process in Ringsend was riven by distrust and suspicion throughout. Earlier negative experiences of DCC had set the adversarial tone for the nature of the engagements that would ensue. The community judged the effectiveness of the CIG process to be compromised by a lack of openness and transparency on the part of DCC. As the CIG process became mired in confusion and mistrust which proved impossible to overcome, the community came to entertain suspicions on a wide range of issues, including the selection process for the CIG; the independence of the facilitator appointed to chair its meetings; the site-selection process for the proposed waste-to-energy facility and the real rationale underlying the establishment of the CIG process. The very extensive resources invested by DCC in this consultation process were never to succeed in quelling the community's distrust.

Demoralisation, fatalism and alienation

For those communities whose trust had been breached, possibly irreparably, a very significant degree of demoralisation was to ensue. In the wake of the rejection of the agreed masterplan in St. Michael's Estate, community employees described a very demoralised and

shattered community. The credibility of community leaders and employees had been damaged and they anticipated great difficulties in persuading residents to engage in similar planning processes in the future. While the community of Ballybeg had not suffered the same reversal of fortunes, it had witnessed a participative process in which expert knowledge had been privileged over local knowledge. It had participated in a process that had undermined community confidence and engendered a perception that community participation was futile. A similar degree of fatalism was evident in Tallaght where people had lost both “the ability to trust the process” and any belief that their involvement would make any difference to proceedings.

While feelings of demoralisation and fatalism were in some instances understood to derive directly from the experience of engaging in the plans and projects at issue in this report, it was also clear that these feelings were cumulative. Community representatives in the Liberties/Coombe described the demoralisation, pessimism and resignation left in the wake of the fragmentation of a once strong and confident working-class community over successive decades. The community’s alienation from the local authority in Tallaght was understood to be part of a more generalised alienation from the state and its agencies. In a broader environment in which power was increasingly being centralised away from the community, it was suggested that feelings of powerlessness should be understood as a reasonable assessment of the existing balance of forces as opposed to any indication of community pathology. Irrespective of the explanation advanced, it was evident that the will to engage was seriously impeded in those instances where the community believed its participation to be inconsequential.

Apathy

In seeking explanations for non-engagement, the received wisdom often settles on the perceived apathy of poor communities. Apathy was indeed identified as constituting a barrier to engagement in a number of instances. In some cases, a general communal apathy was understood to follow from the multitude of other serious and often more immediate problems facing poor communities as they became increasingly debilitated and incapacitated. In others, apathy was attributed to the inability of communities to comprehend the full import and consequence of plans and proposed developments. Engagement was seen as being more likely where the impacts of proposed developments were immediately visible.

However, although apathy is often cited as a barrier to the engagement of poor working-class communities in public affairs, a number of community representatives refuted such explanations in favour of more critical assessments of the non-participation of communities in processes that had a determining effect on their lives. For such individuals, the non-participation of large swaths of the population was not explained by either communal listlessness or contentment with the *status quo*. Both explanations were viewed as inherently conservative assessments of declining engagement in public processes. Those possessing a more critical perspective suggested that it might more reasonably be understood as a wholly rational response resulting from alienation from underlying power structures.

6.9. Representation, Accountability and Community Dynamics

In the midst of many criticisms levelled at different aspects of the orientation and operation of those bodies charged with the implementation of renewal, regeneration and infrastructural projects, it was clear that a number of factors internal to communities were also impeding the effective representation of community interests in the state’s consultative and implementation structures.

Representation and accountability

This discussion has already alluded to concerns about the manner in which community representation was accorded on a number of the forums under consideration. In the case of the Docklands, concerns about the lack of transparency and democracy in the ministerial selection and appointment of community representatives extended to the role played by

community representatives in curtailing community representation. The establishment of a community liaison committee within the DDDA represented a second forum through which the community could seek to influence proceedings and an opportunity to broaden community participation and representation beyond those individuals chosen to sit on the DDDA Council. That opportunity was refused by the DDDA and sitting community representatives alike. Expressing regret about the community's failure to broaden its representative base within the DDDA, one community representative attributed the failure to fears about the incursion of other community groups onto 'their patch.' The failure was viewed as a missed opportunity to enhance the strength and accountability of the community's representation.

In a situation in which communities were operating with very limited resources, community representatives in other areas were aware that information was not filtering out to their constituent communities. Those who undertook to engage with the substantive planning issues at stake in the implementation of the Liberties/Coombe IAP were obliged to grapple with increasingly complex and contentious planning issues and decisions. While they were to succeed in mounting a strong and informed engagement with the local authority, an engagement underwritten by a series of carefully researched reports and position papers, they were conscious that the wider community was not kept apprised of the key issues at stake. One community representative described their culpability on this matter. "We fell into the trap... We didn't fully respect and appreciate where the community was either. As we were learning, it didn't necessarily mean that the community itself was being brought along at the same tempo."

Community dynamics

The failure of communities to reach an agreed position on developments within their area emerged as a barrier to effective community participation in a number of other cases. In Ballymun, community representatives listed community splintering, fragmentation and the absence of a collective sense of responsibility among the factors detracting from the effective presentation and pursuit of the community's interests. Significantly, those 'outside the process' were understood to be the agents of such splintering and dissent. However, while individual community representatives may have chosen to present the objections of those outside the process as vexatious, it is important to note that their objections appeared to revolve around core planning, health and safety issues. In light of the criticisms advanced of that community's failure to reach a collective position, it is interesting to note that community representatives had not themselves taken any steps to reach such a collective position in their official capacity as community representatives on the board of BRL. Notwithstanding the acknowledgement of community dynamics and politics as an impediment to the consolidation of the community's position, there was also a certain amount of trepidation about the emergence of an organised and critical community bloc that might act in an obstructive manner.

Community disunity, of a different order, was also problematic in Ringsend. Here, the community in this instance had no difficulty in reaching a collective position on its opposition to the siting of the waste treatment plant on the Poolbeg Peninsula but there was significant disagreement within both the community information group and the wider community about the best course of action to be taken on foot of such a position. Community disagreement appears to have centred on whether the community's interests were best served by remaining within or leaving the CIG process. While some felt that it was important to remain involved to demonstrate the community's willingness to participate in the consultation process and to arm the community with the fullest possible information, others felt that their participation would be used to legitimate a process of which they were very critical. There was no agreement on whether the community's participation would provide it with an opportunity to influence proceedings or merely forearm the developer with the information necessary to produce a 'watertight' environmental impact statement. In a manner not dissimilar to the Liberties/Coombe, agreement did not prove possible and several resignations ensued.

Changing dynamics

In an environment in which the dearth of resources has featured very prominently in the range of barriers impeding community participation, it is interesting to note at least one community in which the greater availability of funding in the community development sector appears to have impeded the greater participation of the community. This point was made in respect of the community of Ballymun where one community representative attributed the difficulties in securing the involvement of the wider community to the influx of public funding and professional anti-poverty workers, an influx which had deprived the community of its initiative, activism and dynamism.

6.10. Consistency of Plan Implementation

Having attended earlier to the adequacy of the structures in which communities were invited to participate (see 5.3 above), attention now turns to the standing of the plans prepared and implemented within those same structures. It looks particularly at the manner in which varying degrees of consistency in the implementation of the physical planning component of those plans impacted on the participation of communities.

In an environment in which local authorities and specially-designated organisations had invested significant time and resources in the consultation, preparation and agreement of renewal and regeneration programmes, communities appear to have had reasonable grounds to trust to the subsequent implementation of those plans in a consistent manner. In some cases, that confidence was to be betrayed at the earliest of stages. The masterplan for the regeneration of St. Michael's Estate was, as outlined earlier, jettisoned in its entirety at the outset and the community was never to have the opportunity to participate in its implementation. Other plans did move into implementation phase where it was possible to establish whether community confidence in the provisions of these plans would be rewarded. As their implementation proceeded, community attention increasingly came to focus on the ability of the various plans to deliver on their commitment, at times, in the face of competing demands and changing policy environments.

The abstention of communities from planning matters

It is only possible to distinguish the degree of consistency in the implementation of the physical planning components of plans in those instances where community representatives engaged, or had the opportunity to engage, with the specific planning provisions of individual plans.

As the Tallaght IAP, for example, did not contain a design framework plan, the design specifications to which developers may have been required to adhere in the development of tax-designated sites were removed from the ambit of community representation. In addition to the exclusion of such potentially contentious design details from the brief of the monitoring committee, the location of designated sites at a substantial distance from residents' homes ensured that the nature and extent of development sought would not attract the same critical attention as might have occurred had the sites been located more centrally. "If the IAP area had been the whole area, encompassing all the infill housing and the new build, we'd have been in a terribly different space." The Tallaght IAP was, in any case, an IAP in which community participation was largely centred on the development and implementation of the plan's community gain mechanism. The degree to which planning decisions taken were consistent with this IAP appears to have been a matter for local-authority officials only.

Instances of planning contraventions

In the Liberties/Coombe IAP, a number of community representatives undertook to engage with the specific planning provisions of the IAP. Unlike their counterparts in Tallaght, community representatives in the Liberties/Coombe were armed with very specific design specifications in relation to each of the plan's tax designated sites. They were thus in a position to ascertain whether or not planning decisions complied with the specifications laid

down in the IAP. In seeking to ensure that the area would be developed in accordance with the development briefs contained in the IAP, they were to meet one of the most formidable barriers to community engagement, a local authority under no obligation to adhere to its own design specifications or to the IAP. As development conditions became increasingly favourable for developers, the community witnessed DCC becoming increasingly flexible about the standing of design specifications given under oath. As the local authority proceeded to grant a succession of planning permissions in contravention of the IAP, community representatives were obliged to concede that the local authority had misrepresented the standing of the IAP and that they were now participating in a structure of no fixed standing, monitoring a plan of no fixed standing. The sense of betrayal among those community representatives who understood DCC to have made a contract with the community was palpable.

In refusing to acknowledge the existence of a *de facto* contract with the community, DCC's stance stands in sharp contrast to that taken by the DDDA. While the DDDA's masterplan was described as strategic and 'broad brush' in content, the detailed design specifications outlined in its area action plans and S.25 planning schemes were understood to comprise 'a contract with the community.' Unlike DCC, the DDDA was "very much of the view that a local area plan is a contract with the local community and a planning scheme is a contract." While others, including very senior local-authority planners, were to advocate a similar line in the case of the Liberties/Coombe, the argument went unheeded that public officials should honour all planning commitments, particularly those planning principles 'laid down' under oath, and 'account for their stewardship'.

The local authority's contravention of the IAP was to prove one of the most formidable barriers to the community's participation in the Liberties/Coombe. In the first place, it shifted the community's relationship with DCC onto a decidedly antagonistic track, an antagonism that would be deepened by the revelation that DCC had taken a covert decision to supercede the IAP and was standing over all contraventions of the plan. It also obliged community representatives to take their planning concerns into a new planning arena with all of the attending barriers. Those who continued to object to the granting of planning permissions in contravention of the IAP were directed to the third-party appeals system and An Bord Pleanála, a direction judged to be remarkably cynical and adversarial in light of the huge and expensive obstacle that a poor community would encounter in entering such an arena. In addition to having to grapple with the complexities of the planning appeals system, the community would now also be obliged to grapple with the many pressures exerted by political and private development interests on third-party appellants.

Incomplete information of planning contraventions

As the dearth of professional and financial resources obliged many community representatives to absent themselves from planning matters to concentrate instead on the overtly social and community gain aspects of developments, it is not possible to comment on the degree to which such plans adhered to the design specifications originally laid down or intended for them. If the experience of the one community which did undertake to engage with the planning decisions being taken within its IAP were to be replicated across other renewal plans, it is possible that the incidence of planning contraventions on tax-designated sites may be significantly more prevalent than reported. It is in such a scenario that the significance of community abstention from planning matters becomes fully apparent.

6.11. Privileging Private-Sector Interests.

Each of the renewal, regeneration and infrastructural projects under consideration in this report involved substantial private-sector interests. In an arena permeated by enormous power differentials that did not favour the representatives of poor urban communities, it was to be expected that communities would encounter powerful barriers in the pursuit and defence of their interests.

Pragmatism in the face of commercial dictates

In communities such as the Docklands, community representatives recognised and dealt with the commercial interests driving the DDDA's plans by adopting a pragmatic approach, recognition of the commercial framework within which the plan was proceeding and determination to maximise the benefits to the community from such private investment. While the adoption of such a pragmatic approach yielded considerable returns in the areas of education, employment and housing, it also placed the community representatives in a position whereby every assertion of an interest perceived to threaten the commercial viability of the area's renewal was met by resistance from both DDDA officials and other Council members. The greatest resistance was, of course, reserved for those demands impinging on the commercial interests of the private sector. While the community's educational demands were, for example, conceded without difficulty, it met significantly greater resistance to its other demands in relation to the 20% local employment charter and the 20% social and affordable housing stipulation.

While the provisions of the masterplan were eventually agreed, that same tension and resistance would resurface in the implementation phase of the plan around such issues as the proportion of social and affordable housing to be allotted between the two distinct categories of housing, the long-term management of the socially-rented units and pressure from developers to segregate the social and affordable housing units from private units in the interests of maximising the profitability of the latter.

While the manner of engagement in the Tallaght IAP may not have been the product of such a considered assessment of the balance of forces, it was similarly characterised by an engagement in which the community's stake in the implementation of the plan was firmly located in the benefits accruing from the investment of the private sector. In an IAP whose tax-designated sites were described as "relatively uncontested" and from whose development the community largely absented its interest, the grounds for public-private conflict had effectively been removed. Thereafter, the community's interests appear to have been directly linked to the fortunes of the private-development sector. Community representatives remained firmly fixed on the development and administration of the community gain mechanism established under the IAP. The benefits delivered through the Community Linkage Fund appear to have been particularly significant in engendering the widespread support of the community.

Tension and conflicts relating to social mix

Conflicts of interest between public and private interests were not so easily assuaged in other communities. Early concerns about the encroachment of private residential development on publicly-owned land in St. Michael's Estate were confirmed by subsequent proposals that the estate be regenerated through a public-private partnership. While the new framework plan represented a significant diminution of the community's interests, the formal announcement of such a process did at least have the merit of making the interests of the private-development sector explicit. The regeneration of the estate would now be contingent on the profitability criteria of the private sector. These would see building heights and densities greatly increase in a segregated development in which the public housing element would significantly decrease. Beyond the evident deterioration of the community's position within such a public-private partnership arrangement, community members were also keenly aware of the net transfer of public assets that would ensue under such an arrangement.

The conflict between public and private interests was also evident in the regeneration of Ballybeg. The community entered into a regeneration process in which extensive private residential development was one of a number of non-negotiable aspects of the area's regeneration. While WCC maintained that a greatly increased residential population was necessary to sustain the planned neighbourhood centre, shops and services, community representatives remained unconvinced about their stake in the proposed developments. First, they feared that the influx of a large number of households would place unsustainable demands on an already overburdened service infrastructure. They were also concerned about the number of roads proposed for the area. The most serious concern, however,

appeared to centre on the optimum social mix to be effected in the new housing developments. In a community in which many sought the provision of substantial numbers of social and affordable housing units, there were concerns about the emphasis on private housing. Many were to conclude that WCC's interests were confined to the development of infill housing in Ballybeg and new (private) housing estates on adjoining land rather than there being any real commitment to improving the living conditions of its existing public housing tenants.

In a plan that involved the regeneration of an entire public housing estate, community representatives in Ballymun were also concerned about social mix issues, if from a slightly different perspective. While other communities sought to increase the share of public housing units relative to private units, community representatives in Ballymun were afraid that the influx of private capital would serve to consolidate social housing as the area's dominant tenure. In a regeneration plan that understood the future sustainability of the area to be tied into the arrival and settlement of new and more affluent populations, community representatives feared that these new private residential units would be sold off to investors "who [would] then return it [the housing units] to Eastern Health Board at the expense of the change in social mix." Such a scenario prompted fears that the heavy involvement of private investors would, in fact, function to compound the area's problems.

Tensions and conflicts relating to laissez faire renewal

The 1998 Urban Renewal Scheme was driven by tax incentives and was always going to privilege the interests of the private-development sector over those of the community. In undertaking to engage with the preparation and implementation of the Liberties/Coombe IAP, that principle was effectively conceded in return for promised and substantial community gains. Unlike the community of the Docklands which had faced the most formidable resistance to its interests during the formulation and agreement of the masterplan, the community of the Liberties appeared to encounter little difficulty in persuading the local authority to incorporate many of its objectives in the IAP. Had the plan been implemented in accordance with the commitments and specifications outlined in the published IAP, it is unlikely that any major conflict would have arisen between the community, the local authority and the private-development sector.

While the community had encountered little resistance in the consultation process preceding the IAP, it did meet formidable resistance to its interests once the plan moved into implementation phase. It was confronted by a renewal plan in which the interests of the private-development sector were privileged throughout over those of the indigenous community. In practical terms, that was viewed by the community as being translated into a jettisoning of many of the commitments which would be injurious to the profitability of the private-development sector: the community gain commitment, to significant extent; the local labour commitment; the social and affordable housing commitment; and the design specifications attaching to the plan's tax-designated sites. Subsequent revelations that neither the IAP nor the commitments given, nor the design specifications contained therein were in any way binding dispelled any remaining illusions about the community's standing in the plan's implementation. Thereafter, the community confronted a private-development sector in a virtually *laissez faire* development arena in which it could compete with neither the statutory powers of the local authority nor the resources and influence of the private-development sector. The minority who undertook to engage with the substantive issues at stake in the implementation of the IAP were eventually to concede the simple incompatibility of their interests with those of the private-development sector. For those who subsequently resigned, it appears that the plan's inherent private-sector agenda became the final and insurmountable barrier to effective community participation.

Opposition in the absence of demonstrable gains

All of the above renewal and regeneration plans promised significant gains for the communities concerned. In almost all cases, the interests of poor communities were presented as being inextricably intertwined with the interests of the private-development

sector. The formulation and presentation of plans in this manner was to place many community representatives in an ambivalent and conflicted position. Where community gains were to be made, they often felt obliged to concede very significant ground and interests to the private-development sector. With notable exceptions, few communities appeared to reach an agreed position on whether or not their interests lay in the implementation of individual plans.

The proposed siting of the waste-to-energy facility on the Poolbeg Peninsula was notable in the clarity and unanimity of the community's response. In a project perceived to privilege the interests of residents of other areas of the larger Dublin region over those of the residents of Ringsend, the community remained implacably opposed to the siting of the thermal treatment plant in its area. The barrier confronting the community of Ringsend/Irishtown in relation to the proposed siting of the waste-to-energy facility was accordingly not just one in which the interests of other parties were being privileged over theirs, but a rather more fundamental one in which their interests were simply being denied. In such a situation, the only remaining issue of contention for the community was the optimum course of action to be taken in opposing the local authority's plans for the area.

6.12. Credence Accorded To Community Planning Interests And Concerns

This discussion opened by acknowledging that community assessments were an important barometer of the local authority's commitment to community participation. It also argued that the strength of that commitment would be more readily discerned in an examination of the local authority's actions to give practical effect to that rhetorical commitment. This discussion has attended to a number of those actions: the point at which the community's participation was sought; the adequacy of the structures in which communities were invited to participate; the adequacy of the timeframe within which community participation was to take place; the accessibility of local-authority planners and planning information; the adequacy of the resources underwriting the community's participation; the standing of community representatives *vis-à-vis* officials and other stakeholders; the consistency with which plans were implemented; and the degree to which private-sector interests were privileged over public-sector interests.¹⁷ In closing, this chapter now turns to what perhaps comprises and the most significant measure of the relevant authorities' true commitment to community participation, that of the credence given to the community's planning views in the implementation of the various renewal, regeneration and infrastructural projects considered in this report.

The refusal to give adequate weighting to community views

In a number of cases, the local authority's engagement with local communities was characterised by a complete unwillingness to concede the validity of community views and concerns. While the local authority would demonstrate considerable commitment to encompassing the community's views in the negotiation of the agreed masterplan in St. Michael's Estate, its decision to proceed with the preparation of its subsequent framework plan in the absence of any input from the community represented a complete reversal of its previous commitment to community participation. "The process in the design of the new plan was deplorable. People were kept out of it and as a result the new draft framework plan doesn't contain anything that satisfied anybody." The perfunctory consultation process instituted following the preparation of the framework plan was judged to be similarly 'deplorable' and failed to convince the community that its views would receive any consideration irrespective of the form in which it was submitted. The local authority's treatment of the community's concerns in the regeneration of St. Michael's Estate stands as

¹⁷ It has also attended to a number of other factors that cannot be construed as the direct responsibility of the local authority but which did also impact on the community's ability to participate in the planning process: the degree of distrust, demoralisation, alienation and apathy to be found within communities and the significance of community representative and accountability structures and procedures.

one of the most serious indictments of both the local and central government's commitment to community participation.

The commitment of local and central government can similarly be criticised in its treatment of the concerns voiced by community representatives in the Liberties/Coombe IAP. There were repeated attempts to engage both local and central government with the community's growing concerns about the manner in which the IAP was being implemented. This included the publication of a report documenting the community's concerns and proposals in 2001, the mounting of a series of strong challenges to successive planning contraventions within the IAP, the submission of a highly-critical minority report to the Minister for the Environment in 2002, the tabling of a Dail question and the submission of a formal complaint to the European Commission later in the same year. However, no party ever officially conceded the legitimacy of the issues, concerns and questions raised by the community. Community representatives found all relevant parties, including Dublin City Council, the Department of the Environment, An Bord Pleanála and the European Commission, to be similarly indifferent to its concerns. In a situation in which it had become clear that the community had no role to play in the monitoring of the Liberties/ Coombe IAP beyond the provision of a semblance of democracy to the authoritarian manner in which the plan was being implemented, two of the community representatives formally resigned their seats. That decision was greeted with DCC's a predictable degree of equanimity. In the wake of the irreconcilable differences that had led to the resignations, DCC declared all such concerns now to have been 'smoothed over.'

If DCC were to prove adept at withstanding all community opposition within its own structures, it is interesting to note those circumstances in which it was not so successful. Community representatives in the Liberties could point to significantly more positive outcomes for the community in those instances in which it had been either sufficiently mobilised to press its concerns and questions publicly or willing to adopt a confrontational stance *vis-à-vis* the local authority. Similarly, although the public campaign mounted by the residents of St. Michael's Estate failed to persuade DCC officials of the case for reinstating the agreed masterplan, their subsequent lobbying of DCC's elected representatives did result in the rejection of the new draft framework plan by councillors. At a time when increasing concern is being voiced about the erosion of the power of elected representatives, it is interesting to recognise the important powers that are retained by councillors in the disposal of publicly-owned land. Thus, it was the statutory power of elected representatives that was to permit the them to intervene decisively in the matter.

The lesser weighting given to community views

The experience of the communities of St. Michael's Estate and the Liberties/ Coombe stands as the most serious indictment of the local authority's commitment to community participation. While the treatment meted out to the views and concerns of community representatives in Dublin's south inner city may not have been replicated in the other communities consulted, it was clear that virtually all communities occupied a very weak standing in the hierarchy of interests to be taken into consideration in planning matters. In the case of Ballybeg, the community's involvement in the process was sought only after the fundamentals of the regeneration plan had been determined by "the imperatives of national policy and county-level strategic planning." In a situation in which the latter clearly took precedence over the views of the community directly affected by the intended developments, the local community was left to "tinker around the edges of predetermined plans" thereafter. The community of Ringsend was similarly obliged to reconcile itself to a consultation process in which their participation had been sought only after all crucial strategic planning decisions had already been taken. The strict delimitation of the agenda for community consultation in this manner set the parameters for a process in which community views would be given lesser weighting throughout.

Almost all communities reported consultative and participative processes in which the views and knowledge of experts were consistently privileged over those of communities. Although WCC acknowledged on paper the value of the community's knowledge and first-hand

experience, its decision-making processes consistently privileged the expert knowledge of its own officials and consultants. All regeneration business was, in any case, obliged to proceed within the parameters set by the afore-mentioned imperatives of national and county-level policy and planning. In such an environment, community concerns about such central issues as residential development, housing tenure and road infrastructure could be viewed as of little consequence.

This was also the case in Ballymun where community representatives noted the tendency for professionals to defer to the (regeneration) body paying for their services as opposed to the individuals destined to live in the developed spaces. For some, this view was accompanied by a general perception of professional contempt for the non-professional and the non-college-educated, a contempt that construed communities as unwelcome consequences rather than as clients. For some, such tensions were dismissed as inevitable and inconsequential. While other communities railed against the lesser role afforded them in the structures overseeing the implementation of renewal and regeneration projects, community representatives in Ballymun appeared more sanguine about the lesser 'rubber-stamping' role accorded them. They acknowledged that "much of the decisions have already been made" and that their "ability to change anything is very limited," but located their influence in their ability to place an emphasis on aspects of the regeneration plan deemed particularly important for the community.

In a small number of cases, community representatives advanced more positive assessments of the degree of credence given to their concerns. In an IAP in which the community's involvement appears to have centred around the community gain aspect of the plan, community representatives in Tallaght pointed to the positive manner in which SDCC had responded to its concerns about the administration of the Community Linkage Fund. Positive assessments of the local authority's progress in such matters were, however, accompanied by criticisms about the way in which the community's participation was confined to the passive receipt and proffering of information in a process in which its views would never exert a determining influence on the final outcome of decisions. In a process in which SDCC was clearly not deferring to community views, community representatives were beginning to question "who makes the final decisions because some of the decisions that are made have to be purely financial decisions and that's not necessarily the best way of doing things... maybe that's the question - what are the decisions made on and who has the final say?" Furthermore, while community representatives felt that their views received proper consideration within the Monitoring Committee of the IAP, they remained concerned about the extent to which their participation had any bearing on outcomes. The espousal of such a contradictory position was a recurring theme throughout interviews with many of the community personnel consulted: satisfaction at the degree of consideration given their views; dissatisfaction at the failure of such consideration to translate into tangible outcomes.

Serious attention to community views – the exception

Of all of the engagements considered in this report, the community of the Docklands appears to have enjoyed the greatest success in influencing the outcome of its regeneration plan. While the community may not have prevailed in all instances, most representatives believed that their views were given proper consideration by the DDDA. The achievements of community representatives on the DDDA in relation to their three priority issues (education, employment and housing (with particular reference to their success in achieving a 20% social and affordable housing stipulation)) represented a very significant achievement in this respect. Notwithstanding the resistance encountered in agreeing to and delivering on the community's key objectives (see 5.11 above), community representatives continued to rate their achievements within the structures of the DDDA very highly.

The weighting given to the community's views in the formulation and implementation of the DDDA's masterplan would appear to be directly attributable to the standing of the structures in which they were invited to participate and the standing of the masterplan agreed therein. Unlike the governmental indifference that greeted the community's refusal to sign off on annual reports in the Liberties/Coombe IAP, community representatives in the DDDA had

"[the power] to sign-off the master plan...we knew we had power, that the master plan could go nowhere unless everyone agreed to sign it off." Unlike the IAPs that included similar and very ambitious social objectives, the DDDA's masterplan could not be dismissed as a guideline document of no standing. Unlike the IAPs in which communities had little assurance beyond the word of the local authority, the social agenda in the Docklands was "very much built into the fabric of the masterplan" – a masterplan that was crucially "protected through legalisation."

Addendum on the degree of weighting given to community views

When considering the question of participation in the case studies reviewed in this report, many communities approached the consultative and participative structures from a history of having experienced fractious relationship with the local state, where they had become accustomed to their interests and concerns receiving scant regard. That dynamic does not appear to have been altered to any significant extent in the majority of cases considered. At a time when local authorities have been intent on engaging poor urban communities in the implementation of virtually all plans and projects designated for their areas, they have steadfastly refused to grant those communities any meaningful weighting or standing within their structures.

Differing interpretations have been offered of such indifference from the relatively benign to the highly critical. This is a question that might, perhaps, be best considered with reference to the corporate and entrepreneurial culture increasingly pervading the policy and practice of local authorities. It is a culture which does not operate at the bidding of poor working-class communities. While government officials may prefer to focus on the soft barriers impeding the community's participation, it seems that the single greatest barrier to the meaningful participation of poor communities is frequently the simple incompatibility of their interests with those of the private-development sector.

7. COMMENTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

The informational, technical, resource and estrangement barriers which impede the entry of inner-city communities into the planning, infrastructural development and urban renewal arenas did not represent the totality of difficulties encountered by inner-city communities. The small number of community representatives who did manage to surmount these barriers confronted a whole new series of obstacles upon gaining entry to the planning arena. The state agencies seem far more comfortable in focusing on the internal barriers and the community's need for 'capacity building', rather than seeing the agenda progress to more critical barriers/obstacles. Where those practical tangible barriers (e.g. deficiency of knowledge, expertise and resources) were overcome, it was salutary to note that this generally served only to clarify the powerlessness of ordinary citizens in seeking to defend their planning interests in the face of powerful state and property-development interests.

It was noteworthy that within the case studies included here, all of the participation initiatives had derived from managerial origins. While this is praiseworthy, none had sought at an early stage in the process to solicit from the communities concerned any input regarding either the format for participation or the function which it would play. These were presented as *faits accomplis* that communities would have to accept if they were to enter the process. From their very origins, the reality of 'participation' would consequently be very narrowly defined.

Several issues with regard to the way in which participation was sometimes solicited give cause for serious concern. Some of the points raised by community groups were of such a simple character that they force one to question whether much serious attention had ever been devoted by local-authority officials to the problems that poor working-class communities might experience in engaging fully in a system of participation.

When considering the question of effective participation, it is useful to reflect upon the degree to which real power was redistributed under participation arrangements. In this context, it is pertinent to note Arnstein's (1969) seminal work on citizen participation, referred to in Chapter 1, in which she devised a 'ladder of empowerment' where genuine participation was equated with the redistribution of power between interest groups through negotiation. The 'rungs' on this ladder range from Citizen Power, through Degrees of Tokenism down to Non-Participation, including 'cynical consultation' and 'civic hype'. The findings of this research tend disconcertingly to indicate that, within the ethos of deepening entrepreneurialism of local authorities, 'participation' is commonly anchored firmly towards the lower end of that ladder. It is frequently 'tokenistic', often highly cynical and sometimes amounts to little more than 'civic hype' where 'participation' becomes perverted into a public-relations instrument for those with real decision-making power.

It is imperative for managers to understand and take on board the following:

1. With regard to public meetings, an accurate written record should be taken of comments and contributions made during the meeting. Officers should not, at the termination of meetings and discussions, simply invite written comments from participants because not everyone is comfortable at writing down their views on paper, especially in communities where illiteracy/semi-literacy rates are high.
2. Local-authority tenants may be wary of expressing their disquiet publicly in a manner which identifies them individually to an authority that also functions as their landlord.
3. Deprived communities are likely to have difficulty in dealing with plans and with professionals. The full interpretation of documents requires assistance of an impartial nature with respect not only to technicalities of documents but also to broader strategic issues of what alternatives might be possible and the community's legal right to oppose undesired policies and press for additional options that are deemed more desirable.
4. Representing communities is highly time-consuming. Public-sector officers are remunerated for their role in the participation process, which should rightly be viewed as an

inherent aspect of their employment, rather than as a burdensome addition. However, the success of participation hinges on the voluntary commitment by unpaid community representatives to time-consuming attendance at meetings, information dissemination, discussion and feedback. It is essential for the legitimacy of the participation process that such consultation between community representatives and residents be given sufficient time to take place fully. Agendas for the participation process should therefore not be conditional upon artificial timescales set to suit the agendas of the public-sector bureaucracy or the demands of private-sector partners. For obvious reasons, new proposals and revisions should not be tabled at times when people are unlikely to be able to devote adequate attention to such items (e.g. summer holidays, Christmas etc.) when community representatives are unlikely to be able to elicit broader discussion and feedback from within the community.

It must further be borne firmly in mind that participation becomes well-nigh impossible when:

1. Resourcing and impartial professional advice is inadequate.
2. There is a lack of respect for community representatives from officials, characterised by an attitude of superiority grounded in a belief that, as professionals, “we know best”.
3. Terms of reference for participation bodies are poorly defined and communities are lured into the process of participation by promises as to their role in the planning process only to find that ground rules change without notification, procedures are inappropriate and the provision of information is inadequate.
4. Misleading information and untruths destroy trust.
5. Character assassination and the public undermining of community representatives takes place.

Managers, planners and other local-authority officers tend to be drawn predominantly from a middle-class background. They have, perhaps, little experience or even much conception of the imperative role which ties to family and community may play in combating the hardships dealt by a life characterised by chronic economic disadvantage and personal devaluation in an intensely hierarchical society which not only fails to recognise the value of anything other than ‘middle-class’ lifestyles, culture and aspirations, but seems to pursue policies which undermine those fundamental elements of working-class community life and family ties that make life bearable for residents in deprived localities.

Planning matters. It purports to be one of the most democratic domains of local decision making about the shaping of current and future geographies of our communities. It can be a vehicle for positive and constructive management and allocation of resources. However, if it fails to recognise and address its own deficiencies, particularly those relating to equity and inclusiveness in the decision-making process, it can be a potentially destructive instrument with undesirable outcomes, as illustrated through many of the case studies presented in this report.

In the process of managing urban change, planners and urban managers should ensure that already-deprived communities are not also obliged to bear disproportionately the additional burdens arising from change. It is highly unlikely that, under the guise of ‘community participation’, the treatment extended to some of the deprived urban communities examined in this research would have been contemplated for middle-class areas where expertise, knowledge, political linkages and economic power are far greater. It certainly would not have been tolerated by them.

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